

# QUALITY ASSURANCE HANDBOOK

2026 Edition – Part B

Section 4: Programme Participation

2026

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## Programme Participation

*Student assessment procedures are expected to have clear regulations covering student absence, illness and other mitigating circumstances.*

QQI (2013)<sup>1</sup>

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This section of the *Quality Assurance Handbook* sets out expectations for learner engagement with programmes of study. Above all, DBS wishes its learners to be able to complete their studies successfully and to support them in so doing. DBS is aware that learners will from time-to-time experience circumstances whereby they need to take time out from studies or have other circumstances that need to be accommodated. This section therefore lays out the policies associated with engagement and participation on a programme, including:

- Attendance Policy
- Deferral Policy – what to do if you need to take time out
- Personal Mitigating Circumstances (PMC) Policy – what to do if something happens that affects your studies
- Support for Learners with Additional Needs

Assessment-specific regulations are set out in Part B Section 5 of the QAH.

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<sup>1</sup> QQI (2013) *Assessments and Standards, Revised 2013*, Section 2.2.10  
[https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Assessment\\_and\\_Standards%20Revised%202013.pdf](https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Assessment_and_Standards%20Revised%202013.pdf).

## 4.1 Attendance Policy

| <b>Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) Part B</b>  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Document Name</b>                                                                                                               | Attendance Policy                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Policy Document Number</b>                                                                                                      | 015                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Version Reference</b>                                                                                                           | v3.0                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Document Owner</b>                                                                                                              | Head of Academic Operations                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Roles with Aligned Responsibility</b>                                                                                           | QA Officer, Assistant Registrar, Heads of Department, Academic Directors, Programme Coordinators                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Applicability</b>                                                                                                               | All programmes: NFQ L6–9, Study Abroad modules from NFQ programmes, Professional Programmes, Kaplan Professional Awards (English RFQ)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Approved by</b>                                                                                                                 | Executive Board                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Approval date</b>                                                                                                               | 23/07/19, v2.1 02/03/2023, v3.0 25/02/2025                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Date Policy Becomes Active</b>                                                                                                  | 18/09/19                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Revision Cycle</b>                                                                                                              | A minimum of every five years                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Revision History/ Amalgamation History</b>                                                                                      | 26/05/25 - reviewed                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Additional Information</b>                                                                                                      | Active date will be following approval by QQI                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>References/ Supporting Documentation</b>                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ENQA (2015) <i>Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area</i>, Standard 1.3 ‘Student-Centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment’. Standard 1.7 ‘Information Management’.<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• INIS (2011) <i>Guidelines for Colleges Offering Courses to Full-Time Non-EEA Students</i><sup>3</sup>.</li> <li>• <a href="https://www.irishimmigration.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Guidelines-for-Degree-Programme-Students.pdf">https://www.irishimmigration.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Guidelines-for-Degree-Programme-Students.pdf</a> See page 8 where it states “Students enrolled in courses on the Degree Programme will be required to demonstrate that they are progressing academically i.e. to the next year of the course in order to maintain their permission”</li> <li>• <a href="https://www.irishimmigration.ie/coming-to-study-in-ireland/what-are-my-study-options/interim-list-of-eligible-programmes-ilep/">https://www.irishimmigration.ie/coming-to-study-in-ireland/what-are-my-study-options/interim-list-of-eligible-programmes-ilep/</a> See page 7, section 12c “absenteeism and expulsion” on the document Higher Education Programme and Professional Awards Criteria</li> <li>• QQI (2023) <i>Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended and Fully online Programmes 2023</i></li> </ul> |

### 4.1.1 Policy Overview

Regular and punctual attendance is correlated with successful academic achievement.

Each learner is responsible for managing their time to ensure satisfactory attendance is achieved.

DBS considers satisfactory attendance as being attendance that is 85% or above.

<sup>2</sup> [https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG\\_2015.pdf](https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.inis.gov.ie/en/inis/guidelines%20for%20colleges%20-%20august%202011.pdf/files/guidelines%20for%20colleges%20-%20august%202011.pdf>

Non-EU learners on student visas should be aware that attendance, and progression on their programme of study, is a requirement for continuation of study visa. Non-EU learners should refer to the International Student Attendance Requirements in Section 4.1.4 below.

#### 4.1.2 Policy Statement

DBS recognises that specific circumstances may prevent learners from consistently maintaining attendance rates at 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.

Attendance is recorded for those learners who have completed their enrolment. This means that no attendance will be recorded if a learner has not completed their admissions process, returned the offer acceptance form, paid their fees, and received a student card. Attendance is recorded by tagging in via an electronic reader while in class using a student card, or when joining live online classes. Attendance monitoring for online classes includes logging in via DBS credentials and engaging with the live session, in addition to any other specified participation metrics. This is tracked based on the learner's enrolment data and their associated timetable.

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. In addition, where applicable, there may be specific compulsory requirements for a specific programme or component of a programme, or minimum requirements of regulatory or statutory bodies which recognise programmes for professional purposes.

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 and in keeping with best practice, the College invests substantial time and resources in collecting, analysing 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 (PMCs), documentary evidence (e.g. a medical certificate) should be provided via the [Service Desk](#). Time limits for presentation of medical certificates apply. See Section 4.3 below, the Personal Mitigating Circumstances Policy, for full information on requirements.

### 4.1.3 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.

Where a learner fails to attend a compulsory element of a course/programme, there will be no requirement of DBS to offer the learner a further opportunity to undertake the compulsory element. Non-attendance by a learner may result in their failure of that course/programme or the corresponding element of the course/programme.

It is the responsibility of the Academic Director to develop, communicate and implement any such compulsory attendance policy. Where practical, learners must be advised of any such requirements from the outset of the programme. The policy must include details of any potential consequences on a learner's enrolment status or their entitlement to an award should they failed to satisfy the specific attendance requirements.

### 4.1.4 Attendance Requirements for International Learners

#### Class Attendance

In accordance with the requirements of the Department of Justice, and in the interests of promoting engagement with a programme, DBS will record attendance for International Learners<sup>4</sup>, for in-class attendance and for live online classes where they exist.

Attendance is recorded for those learners who have completed their enrolment. This means that no attendance will be recorded if a learner has not completed their admissions process, returned the offer acceptance form, paid their fees, and have received a student card. Attendance is recorded by tagging in via an electronic reader while in class using a student card, or when joining live online classes. This is based on the learner's enrolment data and their associated timetable.

For many International Learners the logistics associated with moving to a new country take time and are often not completed by the start of their course. While DBS typically will make classes and learning materials available online so as the student does not fall behind in the event that they have

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<sup>4</sup> For the purposes of this policy, International Learners are students who are citizens from countries other than those which are members of the European Economic Area or Switzerland. The following countries are members of the European Economic Area: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden.

not arrived in Ireland, it is often the case that elements such as the visa approvals process, flight arrangements or accommodation sourcing are, justifiably, not complete by the time a course starts. In such circumstances, this can mean that a student may not be able to arrive on campus for up to three weeks after the start of class. Therefore, if DBS believes the attendance isn't accurate for the first few weeks of term, and to avoid unfair disadvantage to students, formal attendance may be recorded from the start of week four of the course. Where the course is a multi-year course, this three week period will only apply to the start of the programme, not continuation to a later semester or stage in the programme.

There are strict regulations regarding the class attendance of non-EU students. These regulations have been set by the Department of Justice and Equality, and are enforced by The Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS).

Where requested, DBS will provide attendance information to the Immigration Service.

In addition, DBS will notify the Immigration Service in the event that a student's attendance falls below an acceptable level.

If an International Student requires a letter it must be requested through the Student Self Service Portal <https://students.dbs.ie/dbs-student-services/international-office>. It is a requirement for letters to list attendance which is reflective of the system and this cannot be changed retrospectively.

### DBS Responsibilities

The Academic Operations Department is responsible for the management of student attendance data, Ms. Francisca Knight is the Department Head, however individual students must log any queries via our HelpDesk.

**There is an expectation on every student that they attend every class.** It is typically not required in the validation of the academic programme, other than in instances where practical modules set this out as a requirement. However, we believe the best academic outcome is achieved with full attendance at every class.

For International Learners, DBS understands from the ILEP Arrangements for Higher Education referred to in Section 1 above, that the continuation of their study visa requires them to demonstrate

progression on their programme<sup>5</sup> and may need to periodically, or on foot of certain triggers, provide to the Immigration Service evidence of attendance at classes. It is also a requirement of the Immigration Service Delivery Unit of the Department of Justice that International Learners are required to attend classes and that if high attendance is not maintained on the course they can be expelled by the higher education institution<sup>6</sup>

DBS will enable International Learners to achieve high attendance at their classes. To that end, DBS will

- record all attendance of students at in-person classes and, where applicable, at online classes
- notify students if they miss three consecutive classes, or three classes of the same event (e.g. the same class every day for three days), by means of an automated email
- will make available the overall attendance rate per module, and cumulative attendance, on each respective module's Moodle page for the student to see every time they log on. This attendance data is near real time.
- provide a system to account for any absence caused by a legitimate reason, such as for medical reasons.
- Any issues must be logged via the [Service Desk](#), or directly with the lecturer in question, as soon as practicable to allow a timely correction or review.

Where requested, DBS will provide attendance information, including email correspondence with the student in question, to the Immigration Service Delivery unit of the Department of Justice.

In addition, even though the Immigration Service requirements for Higher Education delivery do not specify a minimum level of attendance in class for an international student, DBS requests that International Learners attend every class. Attendance will be measured during the scheduled Reading Week of each semester and after the final day of class in each semester. Where the recorded cumulative attendance of an international student at these points during the academic year falls below 60%, it will trigger warnings to the student. Where the recorded cumulative attendance of an international student falls below 50% and the student is not engaging with the assessment process, the disciplinary procedure will be triggered. The disciplinary sanction includes expulsion from the College, where the recorded cumulative attendance is below 50%, there is no engagement with

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.irishimmigration.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Guidelines-for-Degree-Programme-Students.pdf> See page 8 where it states "Students enrolled in courses on the Degree Programme will be required to demonstrate that they are progressing academically i.e. to the next year of the course in order to maintain their permission"

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.irishimmigration.ie/coming-to-study-in-ireland/what-are-my-study-options/interim-list-of-eligible-programmes-ilep/> See page 7, section 12c "absenteeism and expulsion" on the document Higher Education Programme and Professional Awards Criteria

assessments and no justifiable mitigation circumstances are presented. In this event the College will notify this fact to the Immigration Service Delivery unit of the Department of Justice. More detail on the steps is provided later in this policy document under the heading Disciplinary Action.

This policy will be communicated to International Learners when they are offered a place on a course at DBS and again during their induction period.

It is the student's responsibility to attend class. Where they cannot attend class due to illness or other mitigating reasons, medical or other evidence must be provided to the Academic Operations Department via the Helpdesk (<https://students.dbs.ie/dashboard/SCCM>). In such circumstances the recorded attendance will take account of this.

### **Student Responsibilities**

International learners must ensure that they are available for classes during full time teaching hours, Monday to Friday, 8am - 5pm. Delivery of classes each week will be spread over a minimum of 3 days. International learners are expected to attend predominantly in person, on campus. Absence due to part-time job commitments is not a valid excuse for missing class or lectures.

Learners are expected to be available during the academic year on the weeks laid out in our academic calendars, available on our website at <https://students.dbs.ie/academicoperations>. These calendars note the holiday periods during the academic year. No other breaks are allowed. Exceptions to this may include the following scenarios:

- Doctor certification of illness
- Verifiable family emergencies.

If a student is deemed to arrive late to class, after the first 20 minutes, they may be subject to having no attendance recorded for that class.

Learners are responsible for maintaining a satisfactory attendance record. Any exceptional absence is to be logged by the learner via the Helpdesk (<https://students.dbs.ie/dashboard/SCCM>), which will be actioned by the relevant Programme Coordinator.

Learners must log their own attendance. They must not give their student card to anyone else to tag in for them. This is a breach of the Learner Code of Conduct and will result in disciplinary action being taken, up to and including expulsion, for both the student who tagged in and for the student whose tag was used.

## Disciplinary Action

As outlined above, learners are made aware of their class attendance every time they log onto Moodle. In addition DBS will notify learners if they miss three consecutive classes, or three classes of the same event, by means of an automated email.

An international student will have their class attendance measured four times every academic year.

In the event that a student's cumulative attendance falls below 60% it will trigger the process noted in the table below. This will also trigger a review of the student's academic progress. If the student is showing progress in their assessments during the academic year to date, then a warning will be issued to the student that they need to increase their attendance. If the review of academic progress demonstrates that the student is not actively engaged in their programme, disciplinary action will be taken by the College and the student is at high risk of being expelled.

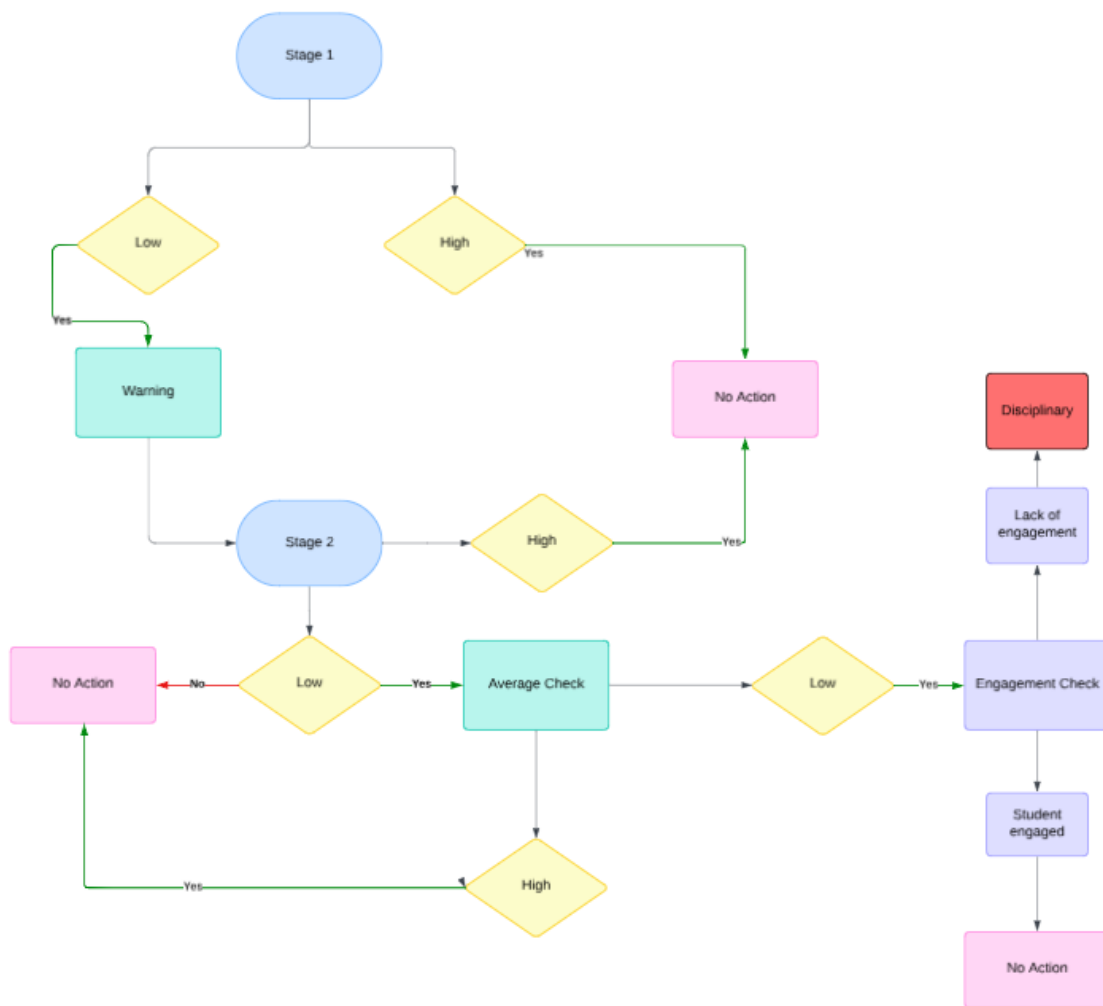
### Cumulative attendance checks

Attendance checks will be carried out on a rolling basis of twice a semester, 6 weeks apart. Student attendance will be checked on a cumulative basis to ascertain whether students have improved their attendance after receiving a warning that it is too low.

| Cadence       | Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| First 6 weeks | Check attendance for the last two weeks of the first 6 weeks as per the policy statement above.<br>Send warning to those below 60%                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 12 weeks      | Check attendance for the previous 6 weeks. If below 60%, check cumulative attendance for the previous 8-12 weeks. If lower than 50%, then the learner's engagement with their coursework will be investigated. If they haven't submitted assignments/exams, they'll be referred for disciplinary action (see below for details). |

|          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|          | <p>If students are engaging with assessment, give students a warning that if their attendance is not improved at the next check, they will be once again put forward to the committee.</p> <p>If a student has lower than 10% after 12 weeks, students are given notification that they are going to be expelled/withdrawn from the programme.</p> |
| 18 weeks | <p>Check attendance for the previous 6 weeks. If below 60%, check cumulative attendance for the previous 12 weeks. If lower than 60%, the same procedures as per 12 weeks apply.</p>                                                                                                                                                               |

## Flowchart



In the event of expulsion, DBS will send written notification of this to the Immigration Service Delivery unit of the Department of Justice who may then take action relative to the validity of the student's visa.

The College's disciplinary policy will apply in the event that discipline is triggered from either the '12 weeks or 18 weeks' review above.

The following summarises the disciplinary policy as it applies to a breach of attendance requirements by International Learners.

- A report from the Academic Operations Department is prepared on the international student's attendance level and sent to the Head of Academic Operations. A report is also prepared of the student's academic progression on their course. This is the investigation stage.

- A learner will be asked for their input to the case, to determine if there are any mitigating circumstances or if they have any information they would like to share with us.
- A Disciplinary Committee is convened as soon as is practically possible if no valid mitigation reasons are put forward. The Disciplinary Committee comprises an Assigned Manager as Chair along with three other staff members
- Once the Committee has been confirmed, the assigned manager will write to the international student and advise them of the date, time and location of the hearing. They are entitled to be accompanied by a friend, a family member or a colleague who is not acting as a legal representative.
- The Disciplinary Committee will hear the case and record its deliberations and finding(s). The meeting will proceed if the student doesn't respond to the invitation.
- The Disciplinary Committee will decide, on the basis of the information presented by both the College and the international student, if the attendance record as presented is correct or if there are any mitigating circumstances that impacted the level of attendance.
- Where the Disciplinary Committee determines on balance that the attendance level presented has mitigating circumstances to justify that level, then the matter will be considered closed and no penalty applied.
- Where the Committee determines that the attendance level as presented is correct and there are no agreed mitigating factors to explain it, the international student will be expelled from their course.
- The student will have the right to appeal the process.

## **Fees Refund**

In the event that an international student is expelled for poor attendance, or any other reason, there will be no refund of fees for the academic year in question, and any outstanding fees for the academic year remain payable and will be pursued for payment.

## **Student Visa Work Hours Regulation**

Under the conditions of a student visa (Stamp 2), international learners are permitted to work for up to 20 hours per week. This is extended up to 40 hours a week during a holiday period. Holiday periods are set by the Department of Justice as June to September inclusive and from 15 December to 15 January.

The same maximum permissible working hours apply while undertaking a Dissertation or Research Project, or while waiting for results.

## International Student Deferrals

Any international student wishing to defer their studies must provide evidence that they have or are intending to leave the country, e.g. flight tickets purchased. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that any deferral is not in breach of the student visa (Stamp 2) requirements. DBS will notify the Department of Justice and Immigration Services Delivery (ISD) that the student has elected to defer their studies and is returning home.

It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that visa permissions are in order when returning to study after the deferral period.

### 4.1.5 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. DBS offers a range of virtual support services, including online appointments with academic support, counselling, and careers services, accessible through the Student Self Service Portal. However, it is each learner's responsibility to avail of these. Attendance is a key contributor to learner success.

Whilst DBS does not impose compulsory attendance, except where specified or where an external agency imposes specific 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 impacting upon their programme of study. However, where the College observes attendance levels that give cause for concern, efforts will be made to contact the learner concerned. In the case of personal mitigating circumstances (PMCs) 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 a lecturer's absence, DBS will make every effort to arrange an alternative lecturer. Where this is not possible, the class will be rescheduled.

### 4.1.6 Learner Responsibilities

Learners are required to arrive for classes punctually and remain present for the duration of the class. Learners are required to ensure they have access to a stable internet connection, a computer with a webcam and microphone, and any specified software necessary for participation in live online classes. Learners are required to actively participate in the class and follow the reasonable instructions of their lecturer.

Beyond tagging in, active engagement in live online classes may be monitored through participation in polls, online discussions, collaborative activities, and contributions to Q&A sessions, as determined by the module lecturer.

All learners are expected to adhere to the DBS Online Learning Etiquette guidelines, which foster a respectful and productive virtual classroom environment.

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 e-mail.

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 greater than one calendar month and there has been no attempt to contact the College, and/or no reasonable explanation for the learner's 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 the absence has not been recorded as authorised through the submission of a PMC form and supporting documentation, the learner may not be entitled to progress on their chosen programme of study. 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.

Each learner is required to use their student card and the scanning device located in each classroom to scan in for each class that they attend. In the rare instance of a fault with the scanning device or a student card, the learner must notify the lecturer immediately so that attendance can be recorded manually. For live online classes, learners must log into Zoom with the DBS credentials and not personal zoom accounts for attendance to be recorded. Watching playbacks of recordings does not count towards attendance.

It is each learner's responsibility to ensure accurate and honest recording of their attendance.

Recorded attendance is displayed on Moodle. This affords each individual learner the opportunity to view their record. This attendance record should be regularly 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 a card or cards belonging to others, or requesting someone to scan a card when absent, is considered a disciplinary

offence and will be referred to the Disciplinary Committee where penalties up to and including dismissal from the College may be applied. The College is obliged to provide reports to INIS regarding international students with visa requirements.

#### 4.1.7 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:

- Ensure classes begin and conclude punctually and last for the scheduled duration.
- Provide learners advance notice, where feasible, of a class venue change, or inform learners in good time that a class has been cancelled or rescheduled. This is managed through the use of e-mails and/or text alerts to learners from the Academic Affairs Department.
- Ensure effective attendance monitoring and recording arrangements are in place.
- Notify learners, through the Academic Affairs Department, of its attendance policy including attendance monitoring and any compulsory attendance requirements.
- Ensure Programme Coordinators monitor learner attendance and attempt to contact those absent without notice/explanation.
- Record learner attendance either through the electronic recording system provided or, in the event of a system failure, via paper-based recording overseen by the lecturer.
- Notify learners of the potential implications of their poor attendance or their failure to satisfy specific attendance requirements.
- Ensure lecturers and Programme Coordinators provide advice and guidance to those learners who give evidence of personal mitigating circumstances (PMCs) impacting on their attendance and participation.
- Ensure that the International Office notifies the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of any visa-holding learner who fails to satisfy the attendance regulations as stated.

#### 4.1.8 Advance Information to Learners

From the outset of their studies, as part of orientation and induction, learners should be alerted to the attendance policy and informed of the 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 requirement for College to notify INIS where attendance falls below the required level(s).

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/dates, including examination periods, etc.

Learners are advised that timetables are intended to run as drafted but schedule changes may occur at times due to unforeseen circumstances. In the event of a timetabling change, and where practicable, the learners will be notified at the earliest opportunity by text and/or by e-mail to their DBS account.

#### 4.1.9 Implications of Absence

Learners are made aware of their class attendance every time they log onto Moodle. In addition, DBS will notify learners if they miss three consecutive classes, or three consecutive classes of the same event, by means of an automated email.

Programme Coordinators will initiate contact with any learner where the system indicates their unauthorised absence for a period in excess of one week.

Where the record identifies ongoing or recurring absence without notification, a member of the academic support team will attempt to contact the learner concerned to establish:

1. Whether the learner intends to continue on their programme of study, and
2. 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 the requirements of a professional body, academic validation, or 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 in the event of any appeal.

#### 4.1.10 Personal Mitigating Circumstances (PMCs) 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 that are available to the learner
- Deferral
- Extension requests
- Change of programme
- Transfer of mode of study

Should the learner opt for one or more of the above options, the learner will be required to follow the associated procedure with each instance outlined above and the associated policy will apply.

#### 4.1.11 Failure to Respond to Communication from DBS

Learners who are absent for an extended period, and in excess of one calendar month, and who fail to respond to a minimum of two attempts by DBS to make contact, will be deemed to have withdrawn from their programme of study. The final attempt at communication will notify the learner of their imminent withdrawal and the requirement to make contact within 5 working days in order to avoid this step.

Visa-holding learners will further be notified of the intention to advise INIS of their absence and their non-engagement in their chosen programme of study. Such learners will also be notified of the implications for their residency status.

Should the learner fail to respond to the communications by the fixed deadline, the Programme Coordinator will confirm the withdrawal of the learner and will issue a withdrawal letter to the learner. The student information system will also be updated to reflect the learner's withdrawal.

In the event of a learner withdrawal, the Exams Manager will ensure any completed modules are referred to the Examination Board as scheduled, and that a transcript of results will be issued to the learner if applicable.

A learner will have no entitlement to a refund of fees paid where the College is obliged to withdraw the learner as a result of the learner's own absence and non-communication.

Where a learner is withdrawn due to their 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 in relation to a previous admission will not be carried forward.

## 4.2 Deferral Policy

| <b>Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) Part B</b>    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |  |
|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Document Name</b>                              | Deferral Policy                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                     |
| <b>Policy Document Number</b>                     | 016                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                     |
| <b>Version Reference</b>                          | v2.1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                     |
| <b>Document Owner</b>                             | Chief Operating Officer & Registrar                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                     |
| <b>Roles with Aligned Responsibility</b>          | Assistant Registrar, QA Officer, Exams Manager, Academic Directors                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                     |
| <b>Applicability</b>                              | All programmes: NFQ L6–9, Study Abroad modules from NFQ programmes, Professional Programmes, Kaplan Professional Awards (English RFQ)                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                     |
| <b>Approved by</b>                                | Academic Board & QQI                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                     |
| <b>Approval date</b>                              | 23/07/19, v2.1 02/03/2023                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                     |
| <b>Date Policy Becomes Active</b>                 | 18/09/19                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                     |
| <b>Revision Cycle</b>                             | A minimum of every five years                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                     |
| <b>Revision History/<br/>Amalgamation History</b> | 26/05/25 - reviewed                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                     |
| <b>Additional Information</b>                     | Active date will be following approval by QQI                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                     |
| <b>References/ Supporting Documentation</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• QQI (2022) <i>Assessment and Standards, Revised 2022</i>. Section 3, 'Sectoral Conventions for Assessment'.<sup>7</sup></li><li>• QQI (2023) <i>Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended and Fully online Programmes 2023</i></li></ul> |                                                                                     |

### 4.2.1 Policy Overview

A deferral refers to a break or delay in the completion of a programme of study or a component thereof. These delays can happen for a series of legitimate reasons.

This policy details all available avenues available to learners when coming to a decision to defer either a module or programme stage.

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 opportunities for learners to communicate any circumstances that are impacting upon their studies at the time they arise and/or in the immediate period following same.

### 4.2.2 Policy Statement

Deferral applications can be made for a variety of reasons which may include 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.

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2022-09/assessment\\_and\\_standards-revised-2022.pdf](https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2022-09/assessment_and_standards-revised-2022.pdf)

- A module deferral, during the programme of study.

When considering any deferral request, DBS will take into account the best interest of the learner but will only implement decisions that ensure the academic integrity of the programme and the College. DBS cannot provide personalised learning arrangements for individual learners nor introduce arrangements that either create, or create an impression of, an unfair advantage for an individual learner. The completion of a programme through its natural progression is paramount, and DBS will not facilitate the accelerated completion of a programme beyond what the programme validation permits.

International learners seeking a deferral must refer to *Part B Section 4.1.4, Attendance Requirements for International Learners*, to be aware of the evidence required and legal requirements related to deferrals.

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, learners should continue to actively participate in their chosen programme of study, including with the completion of any and all assessments, until the deferral outcome has been decided. Where there are extenuating circumstances that prevent this, the deferral will be backdated to the date of first notification to the College or, alternatively, to the date indicated on any supporting evidence provided.

Deferral may result in the need to repeat course/programme components that have not previously been entered on the system and ratified. The failure to repeat course/programme components, as required by the College, can constitute the failing of an assessment attempt and will be subjected to the implications this carries in line with *QQI Assessment and Standards, Revised 2022*.

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 should DBS not do so.

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

### **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.

### **Conditions relating to the 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 of the request to defer. The following conditions apply:

- The deferral will be granted for a maximum period of two academic years.
- The deferral will be 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.
- 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 result in the offer being withdrawn.
- Deferred applicants will be subject to the fees applicable at the time they commence the programme of study (and not those fees that applied when an offer of a place was made).

### **Pre-Programme Deferral of a Place (within 2 weeks of registration)**

Pre-programme deferral is only available to those learners who, once commenced, 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.

### **Conditions of 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:

- The deferral is granted for a maximum of one academic year at a time, for up to two consecutive years.
- 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.
- 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.
- Deferred learners will be subject to the fees applicable at the time they commence the programme of study (and not those fees that applied when an offer of a place was made).

- Fees paid before the deferral will be considered as frozen and will be deferred for the duration of the deferral (for up to two years).
- 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, following a deferral.
- 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 after a maximum 30-day grace period following the expiration of the deferral period, the learner 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.

### **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 Academic Director 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 College believes that their continuation may be detrimental to the learner, to the College, or to the individuals or groups with whom they must work in order to complete their studies. In such cases the Academic Director 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.

### **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 completed stage point in the programme. Where learners are authorised to 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:

- The deferral is granted for a maximum of one academic year at a time, for up to two consecutive years.
- DBS reserves the right to discontinue the programme without notification to deferred learners.
- DBS reserves the right to change the format and content of the programme without notification to deferred learners.
- A deferral may result in a learner being required to undertake additional modules and or assessments upon their return.
- A deferred learner will be subject to the fees applicable to the academic year into which they return.
- Fees paid up to the point of deferral will be considered frozen (on a pro-rata basis subject to the stage within the programme at which the deferral is made), and 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, following a deferral.
- 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, a period of up to one month's grace will be applied, after which 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.
- The College is not responsible for student visa extensions in the event of a deferral. It remains the responsibility of the student to manage their visa arrangements and requirements with the appropriate national services. While deferred, students cannot be considered as Active students undertaking their studies, and so may not be eligible for a study visa during this period. The College is required to report to INIS regarding visa-requiring students who are no longer active on their programmes.

## **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.

Submitted independent evidence alone, e.g. a medical certificate, is not sufficient to warrant a module deferral. DBS will always recognise the expertise of independent third-party specialists/medical practitioners in the evidence that they provide, but all deferral decisions will be made based on the requirements of the programme and the need to maintain the highest academic standards and integrity. DBS reserves the right to deny a module or assessment deferral request where it is felt that this may negatively impact upon the academic integrity of the programme or the individual learner experience and/or requirements. A full programme deferral may be offered as an alternative. All such deferral decisions are made by the Academic Director.

### **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:

- The deferral is granted until the next sitting only.
- DBS reserves the right to discontinue the module without notification to deferred learners.
- DBS reserves the right to change the format and content of the module and assessment without notification to deferred learners.
- A deferral may result in a learner being required to undertake an alternative module and/ or assessment.
- A deferred learner will be subject to the fees applicable to the academic year in which they undertake the module.
- 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.
- 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, after a maximum 30-day grace period following the expiration of the deferral period, the learner 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. The student information system will also be updated to reflect the learner's withdrawal.

### **Timescales**

It is the applicant/learner's responsibility to submit a request for a deferral in a timely manner. Delays in submitting a valid deferral request may result in DBS assuming that 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 (see the QAH Part B Section 3.5), the applicant/learner may reasonably expect a response within 20 working days.

### **Fees**

Learners availing of a whole programme deferral and 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.

Learners 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.

#### **4.2.3 Procedures 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 rejected.

#### **Requesting a Deferral of an Offer of a Place**

An applicant wishing to hold an offer of a place may do so by applying to the Admissions Office.

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.

### 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 by logging a ticket via the [Service Desk at servicedesk.dbs.ie](https://servicedesk.dbs.ie) under 'Request a Deferral'. An explanation of the reasons for the request must be given, along with supporting documentation such as medical certificates. The Academic Director will review the request and approve or deny the request.

Learners will be advised of the outcome via the Service Desk ticket.

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

In confirming agreement of the deferral via the Service Desk, the Programme Coordinator must advise the learner of the relevant conditions. 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 Quality Assurance Officer (refer to QAH Part B Section 3.5 for the Appeals Policy). All such appeals must be submitted within 10 working days of the decision being communicated. Any appeal submitted outside this timeframe will be denied. 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.

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.

### Requesting a Programme Deferral

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.

A learner wishing to defer their place on a programme may do so by logging a ticket via the [Service Desk at servicedesk.dbs.ie](https://servicedesk.dbs.ie) under 'Request a Deferral'. An explanation of the reasons for the request must be given, along with supporting documentation such as medical certificates. The Academic Director will review the request and approve or deny the request.

Learners will be advised of the outcome via the Service Desk ticket. Where it is known to be the final intake of the programme, the Programme Coordinator must advise the learner and discuss the implications of possible changes that might be made to the programme construct as a consequence of Programme Review.

In confirming agreement of the deferral via the Service Desk, the Programme Coordinator must advise the learner of the relevant conditions.

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

An appeal against the deferral decision must be submitted with regard to the Appeals Policy outlined in the QAH Part B Section 3.5.

All such appeals must be submitted within 7 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.

### **Requesting a Module Deferral**

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 via the Service Desk, it will be reviewed by the Academic Director who may:

1. Approve the request
2. Deny the request
3. Deny the request but recommend a full programme deferral.

DBS operates on the principle of 'fit-to-sit' or 'fit-to-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 via the Service Desk, the Programme Coordinator must advise the learner of the relevant conditions. 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 Quality Assurance Officer (please refer to the QAH Part B Section 3.5 for the Appeals Policy). All such appeals must be submitted within 7 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.

#### 4.2.4 Returning to Study Post Deferral

It is the learner's responsibility to return to College at the expected time. Learners are required to contact their Programme Coordinator to confirm their intent to resume their studies, and re-register for the new academic year. 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's *Assessment and Standards, Revised 2022*, and specifically Sectoral Convention 3. Assessment regulations regarding repeats are further set out in Section B.5 of the *Quality Assurance Handbook*.

Depending on the reason for deferral, a learner 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.

## 4.3 Personal Mitigating Circumstances (PMC) Policy

| <b>Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) Part B</b>  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Document Name</b>                                                                                                               | Personal Mitigating Circumstances Policy                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Policy Document Number</b>                                                                                                      | 017                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Version Reference</b>                                                                                                           | v2.2                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Document Owner</b>                                                                                                              | Exams Manager                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Roles with Aligned Responsibility</b>                                                                                           | Chief Operating Officer & Registrar, Assistant Registrar, QA Officer, Heads of Department, Academic Directors                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Applicability</b>                                                                                                               | All programmes: NFQ L6–9, Study Abroad modules from NFQ programmes, Professional Programmes, Kaplan Professional Awards (English RFQ)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Approved by</b>                                                                                                                 | DBS Academic Board                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Approval date</b>                                                                                                               | 23/07/19, v2.2 02/03/2023                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Date Policy Becomes Active</b>                                                                                                  | 18/09/19                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Revision Cycle</b>                                                                                                              | A minimum of every five years                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Revision History/ Amalgamation History</b>                                                                                      | 26/05/25 - reviewed                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Additional Information</b>                                                                                                      | Active date will be following approval by QQI                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>References/ Supporting Documentation</b>                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ENQA (2015) <i>Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area</i>, Standard 1.6 ‘Learning Resources and Student Support’.<sup>8</sup></li> <li>QQI (2016) <i>Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines</i>, Section 2.5.2, ‘A Provider Ethos that Promotes Learning’ and Section 2.7, ‘Supports for Learners’.<sup>9</sup></li> <li>QQI (2023) <i>Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended and Fully online Programmes 2023</i></li> </ul> |

### 4.3.1 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. This policy outlines the available mechanisms that are available to learners who present with a mitigating circumstance that precludes participation with given elements of a programme and at certain point in time.

**Personal mitigating circumstances are always outside of the normal stresses that are expected as part of normal participation on a programme of study.**

This policy is applicable to all QQI accredited, and all non-accredited, programmes.

<sup>8</sup> [https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG\\_2015.pdf](https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf>

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.

#### 4.3.2 Policy Statement

This policy is not for the purpose of taking into consideration a diagnosed 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 should consult the Section 4.4 below, Support for Learners with Additional Needs (Needs Extra Provisions).

Learners who feel under pressure as a result of their studies and/or their preparation for assessments should continue to make all reasonable efforts to meet the programme requirements and deadlines and should avail of the support provided by the lecturers, programme leader, DBS Library Service and/or 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 are not normally considered to be extenuating circumstances warranting a learner's absence, nor their failure to submit work, nor their underperformance in an assessment or examination.

DBS does recognise that circumstances can arise 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 a learner can request that these circumstances be taken into consideration when seeking an extension to a submission deadline or when the learner's performance in an assessment is being assessed.

Examples of Personal Mitigating Circumstances can include, but are not limited to, short term illness or injury, the short term illness or injury of a learner's dependant, bereavement (loss of family, kin or close friends), and unavoidable travel requirements (holidays booked once Academic Calendars are made available cannot be considered as PMCs).

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

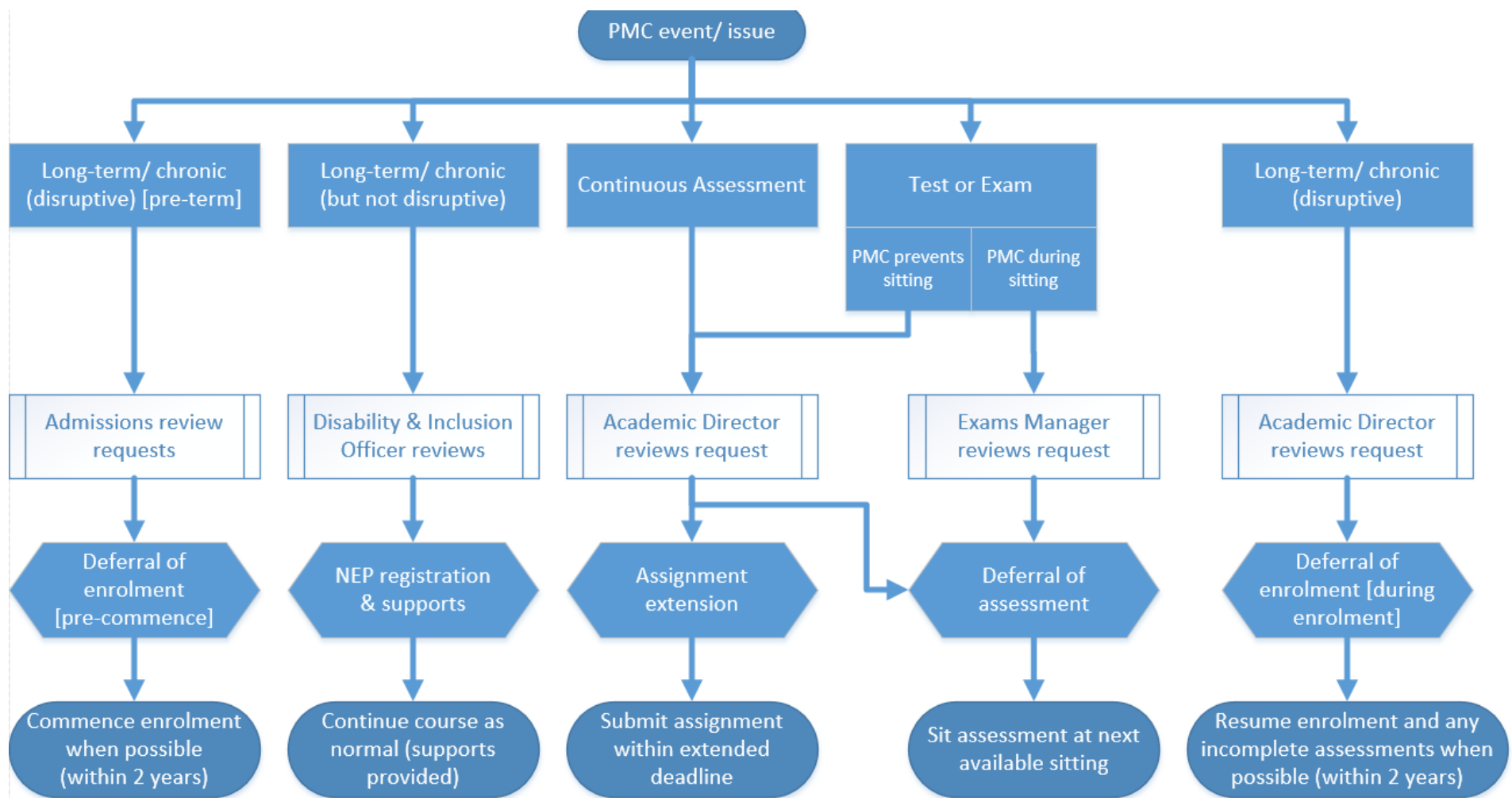


Figure 1 Types of PMCs and Respective Routes

### 4.3.3 Extension Request: Personal Mitigating Circumstances Preventing Completion or Submission of a CA

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

The form is available through <https://students.dbs.ie/dashboard/SCCM> 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 Extension Request 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 Academic Director who will review the form and supporting evidence and will determine an appropriate decision.

The decisions available are:

1. Deny the request (usually due to absence of evidence or insufficient cause)
2. Approve the request
3. Request further information

The Academic Director will notify the learner and the Programme Coordinator of the outcome.

Should the extension request be denied, the learner will be notified of the outcome and the reason for same. The Academic Director will also advise the learner of the penalties and implications of failing to meet the required deadline or complete the assessment concerned.

Should the extension request be approved, 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.

Should further information be required, the Academic Director will contact the learner for further information in order to facilitate a fully informed decision being made.

Should an extension be approved, or an alternative date be approved for the sitting of an in-class assessment, the Programme Coordinator will advise the learner that their failure to submit by the revised deadline or attend on the date of the rescheduled in-class test will result in appropriate penalties being applied.

It is the learner's responsibility to ensure that they satisfy the assessments arrangements following the granting of an extension. Failure to do so may have implications for their enrolment and entitlement to an award.

**Learners are advised not to assume that PMC will be accepted and/or an extension granted.**

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

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

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

#### 4.3.4 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 DBS 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, exam invigilator, Academic Director 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 Academic Director 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 Academic Director 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.

### **Right of Appeal**

An appeal against a PMC decision must be submitted with regard to the Appeals Policy outlined in the QAH Part B Section 3.5.

All such appeals must be submitted within 7 working days of the decision being communicated. Any appeal submitted outside this timeframe will be denied.

The following are the only grounds for appeal:

- A failure on the part of the College to consider information made available to the College that would have influenced the deferral decision.
- 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.

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 Appeal Committee may make a revised decision which can be applied retrospectively if applicable.

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

Where exams are held online, a learner experiencing issues must make every effort to contact the College during the exam, through the official channels and evidence must be provided as set out below.

#### **Illness**

In the case of a learner who becomes unwell during the course of an examination, the learner should notify the College and independent evidence must be provided to the College within ten working days in order to be considered.

## Technical Issues

Learners undertaking online examinations are strongly advised to conduct system checks and familiarise themselves with the online assessment platform prior to the exam date to mitigate potential technical issues.

Any technical difficulties during an online exam must be reported immediately to the exam support/ invigilation team who will attempt to resolve the issue. Learners should not contact their lecturer to report a technical issue.

Where an issue could not be resolved the learner will be advised to submit a Technical Issues Form. Any independent supporting documentary evidence (e.g. time-stamped photos or screenshots of the issue, confirmation from an internet service provider or power provider that a service outage occurred during the time of the examination) must be attached at the time of submission. This independent evidence must be communicated to the College within ten working days in order to be considered.

All exam submissions must be submitted either through Moodle or the Mercer Mettl online invigilation platform depending on how the exam is being administered. Submissions must not be sent directly to lecturers unless explicitly instructed to do so.

The Technical Issues Form must be submitted electronically within 24 hours of the exam sitting. Any independent supporting documentary evidence (e.g. Screenshot, confirmation of service outage etc.) must be attached at the time of submission.

The Technical Issues Form will be automatically submitted to the Exams Office along with the supporting evidence. The Technical Issues Form and evidence recorded during the exam will be reviewed to determine grounds and validity.

Following this review the Examinations Office 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.

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

The Internal Exam Board may recommend the ratification of a deferral to the External Exam Board, but may recommend further detail/clarification on individual cases where appropriate, outside of the Exam Board proceedings by the appropriate teams.

The External Exam Board will ratify any deferral approved through the Personal Mitigating Circumstances policy.

### **Right of Appeal**

An appeal against a decision of the Board of Examiners must be submitted with regard to the Appeals Policy outlined in the QAH Part B Section 3.5.

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

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 in Section 4.2 above and follow the relevant procedure.

#### **4.3.7 Limitations of PMCs**

- Requests for PMCs to be taken into account require valid grounds, and supporting documentation where available, in order to be considered. A lack of valid grounds or supporting documentation may result in a PMC application being denied.
- PMCs cannot be applied indefinitely to a module or programme of study. Maximum deferral periods and programme completion timelines are required to be adhered to, to ensure coherence of a programme of study.
- PMCs considerations/outcomes cannot preclude the ability to achieve the Programme Learning Outcomes being assessed.

#### **4.3.8 Retrospective PMC Applications**

Retrospective PMCs are those applications for consideration following the finalisation and/or release of final results of an assessment or module. DBS will not accept retrospective 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.

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 may be necessary to compare performance in affected assessments and modules with unaffected assessments and modules within a programme stage.

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/or withdrawal. It is essential that learners notify DBS of the circumstances within 7 working days following the release of their results. 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 or ability to engage with the College, or there were substantial and grave reasons why the learner was unable or 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.

## 4.4 Support for Learners with Additional Needs (Need Extra Provision) Policy

| <b>Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) Part B</b>  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Document Name</b>                                                                                                               | Support for Learners with Additional Needs (Need Extra Provision) Policy                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Policy Document Number</b>                                                                                                      | 018                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Version Reference</b>                                                                                                           | v2.3                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Document Owner</b>                                                                                                              | Chief Operating Officer & Registrar                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Roles with Aligned Responsibility</b>                                                                                           | Exams Manager, Student Services Manager, Assistant Registrar, QA Officer, Disability and Inclusion Officer                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Applicability</b>                                                                                                               | All programmes: NFQ L6–9, Study Abroad modules from NFQ programmes, Professional Programmes, Kaplan Professional Awards (English RFQ)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Approved by</b>                                                                                                                 | DBS Academic Board & QQI                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Approval date</b>                                                                                                               | 23/07/19, v2.0 27/05/25                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Date Policy Becomes Active</b>                                                                                                  | 18/09/19                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Revision Cycle</b>                                                                                                              | A minimum of every five years                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Revision History/ Amalgamation History</b>                                                                                      | 26/05/25 - reviewed                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Additional Information</b>                                                                                                      | Active date will be following approval by QQI                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>References/ Supporting Documentation</b>                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AHEAD &amp; HEA (2009) <i>Charter for Inclusive Teaching and Learning</i>.<sup>10</sup></li> <li>• ENQA (2015) <i>Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area</i>, Standard 1.6 ‘Learning Resources and Student Support’.<sup>11</sup></li> <li>• QQI (2016) <i>Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines</i>, Section 2.5.2, ‘A Provider Ethos that Promotes Learning’ and Section 2.7, ‘Supports for Learners’.<sup>12</sup></li> <li>• QQI (2023) <i>Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended and Fully online Programmes 2023</i></li> </ul> |

### 4.4.1 Policy Overview

DBS adopts an inclusive approach to teaching, learning and assessment to enable all learners to fully participate in its education programmes as far as practicable. The purpose of this policy is to provide assurance to potential applicants and learners with additional or specific needs (identified as Need Extra Provision, NEP) that DBS will seek to provide reasonable accommodations to support them in their application and their studies, where this is possible. DBS will provide learners with a disability or specific learning needs with the information required to enable them to seek assistance and arrange for reasonable adjustments where required and appropriate, including in assessment.

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.ahead.ie/userfiles/files//documents/Charter\\_4\\_Inclusive\\_Teaching\\_&\\_Learning\\_Online\\_Version.pdf](https://www.ahead.ie/userfiles/files//documents/Charter_4_Inclusive_Teaching_&_Learning_Online_Version.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> [https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG\\_2015.pdf](https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf>

This policy details the range of learner supports available to learners enrolled on a programme in DBS. This policy applies to learners with permanent or long-term disabilities or health conditions or specific learning difficulties 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 an illnesses or temporary injuries or conditions. These are addressed in the Personal Mitigating Circumstances Policy in Section 4.3 above. This policy 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 see additional professional advice.

DBS adopts the AHEAD *Charter for Inclusive Teaching and Learning*<sup>13</sup> 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 adjustments 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. What is considered reasonable for DBS will vary according to a range of factors and will depend on the circumstances of the individual case. Any excessive cost or adaptations will be deemed unreasonable.

#### 4.4.2 Policy Statement

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 learning needs. Need Extra Provision (NEP) supports are provided to enable engagement in and successful completion of programmes of study, as far as is reasonably practicable and within any wider constraints laid down by QQI or other 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 learning needs, solely on the basis of their capacity to successfully meet the learning outcomes of the programme.
- Provides a learner support service and invites all applicants and learners with additional needs to contact the service to discuss how their requirements may be accommodated.

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<sup>13</sup> AHEAD & HEA (2009) *Charter for Inclusive Teaching and Learning*, AHEAD, [https://www.ahead.ie/userfiles/files//documents/Charter\\_4\\_Inclusive\\_Teaching\\_&\\_Learning\\_Online\\_Version.pdf](https://www.ahead.ie/userfiles/files//documents/Charter_4_Inclusive_Teaching_&_Learning_Online_Version.pdf)

- 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 offers of reasonable adjustments where required.
- Makes reasonable adjustments for the provision of teaching, learning, assessment and examinations where applicable and without impacting the learning outcomes to be assessed.
- Provides learning support services for all learners.
- Promotes an inclusive environment and attitude amongst the whole College community and endeavours to provide appropriate training to staff and faculty where required.
- The College is committed to providing online learning materials and platforms that are accessible to all learners, including those with additional needs, in compliance with relevant accessibility standards.

### **Assessment of Additional Support Needs**

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. Please refer to the AHEAD & Dawn Evidence of Disability Form 2018/19<sup>14</sup> for the list of suitable professionals and documentation. Note that some categories of disability require a report that is no more than 5 years old<sup>15</sup>.

All such reports must:

- Be original
- Be provided on headed paper
- Include recommendations from the relevant expert on the types of adjustments that would be 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 adjustments to learners who do not provide an expert opinion may be deemed as providing an unfair advantage and therefore is not normally permitted.

The Disability and Inclusion Officer is the relevant contact for all learners wishing to discuss learner support needs. The Disability and Inclusion Officer is located in Student Services, and can be contacted at [student.services@dbis.ie](mailto:student.services@dbis.ie) . Any learner who wishes to avail of such supports is strongly encouraged

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<sup>14</sup> AHEAD & DAWN (2018), *Inclusive Learning and the Provision of Reasonable Accommodations to Students with Disabilities in Higher Education in Ireland*, AHEAD Educational Press,

<https://www.ahead.ie/userfiles/files/roadmap/Inclusive%20Learning%20and%20RA%20-%20final.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.ahead.ie/ra\\_appendix\\_evidenceofdisability](https://www.ahead.ie/ra_appendix_evidenceofdisability)

to speak in confidence with the Disability and Inclusion Officer, by appointment, at the earliest opportunity.

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 Disability and Inclusion Officer not later than 6 weeks after the start of their programme.

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 learning difficulties, 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.

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.

#### 4.4.3 Request for Disability Supports

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

##### **Applicants**

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. 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 remains on academic grounds and suitability for the programme 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.

### **Existing Students**

Requests for additional supports should be made to the Disability and Inclusion Officer: [student.services@dbb.ie](mailto:student.services@dbb.ie).

Requests for additional supports or adjustments for assessments or exams must be made at least six weeks in advance of the scheduled assessment. DBS may not be able to accommodate late applications where specific arrangements and resources are required.

Enrolled learners should make their request for additional support to the Disability and Inclusion Officer and include the report of the relevant expert or specialist. The Disability and Inclusion Officer will consider the application and approve additional support and reasonable adjustments as appropriate based on the evidence submitted.

Upon confirming entitlement to additional support, the Disability and Inclusion Officer 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 for the duration of their programme of study with DBS or until such time as supports are not required.

All appropriate assessment arrangements should be made on an individual basis depending on the learner's abilities such as to minimise any possible advantage or disadvantage to the learner.

Arrangements put in place must be achieved in consultation with the learner. Any nominal costs incurred in regard to approved arrangements will be borne by the College.

Failure to contact the Disability and Inclusion Officer within the 6-week timeframe prior to assessments/exams may result in the required supports not being provided in a timely manner. DBS may be unable to accommodate adjustments where their requirement is not brought to the College's attention through registration through the Disability and Inclusion Officer within a timely fashion, i.e. 6 weeks prior to the assessment concerned.

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

#### 4.4.4 Extra Provision for Specific Disabilities and Additional Needs

Refer to Appendix B.4.4 for further detail regarding extra provision for specific disabilities and additional needs, including:

- Hearing Impairment
- Visual Impairment
- Physical Disability
- Dyslexia
- Mental Health

In addition, this appendix sets out practical NEP arrangements, including:

- Extra Time for Examinations and In Class Tests
- Dedicated Rooms
- Extra Time in In-Class Tests
- Rest Breaks during Exams and In-Class Tests
- Spelling and Grammar Waiver
- Alternate Exam Papers Format
- Provision of a Reader
- Using a Reader for In-Class Tests
- Provision of a Scribe
- Scribe for In-Class Tests
- Using a Reader and a Scribe
- Provision of a Laptop
- Using a Laptop in Exams
- Using a Laptop in In-Class Tests
- Alternative Assessment Methodology

#### 4.4.5 Roles with Aligned Responsibility

##### **Disability and Inclusion Officer:**

The Disability and Inclusion Officer manages the comprehensive disability support process for students, from initial outreach and application to coordinating accommodations and ongoing support. Key responsibilities include processing applications, conducting needs assessments, maintaining detailed records, ensuring provisions are implemented, and regularly communicating with students to ensure their continued success.

##### **Admissions:**

The Admissions Department refers applicants to the Disability and Inclusion Officer.

## Academic Staff

Academic Staff are responsible for the implementation of in-class accommodations for students with disabilities. This involves ensuring that approved reasonable accommodations are put into practice during teaching and assessment, and that materials are provided in accessible formats. The individuals in this role will also engage with the Disability Supports to understand student needs and is responsible for upholding academic standards while maintaining flexibility to support student learning.

## Exams Office Staff

Exams Office Staff are responsible for the end-to-end administration of exams for NEP students, ensuring all approved accommodations are correctly implemented. This involves meticulously checking the Disability Register or TSM reports to allocate necessary provisions, updating exam information in the Disability Support Register and Exam Schedule, and creating NEP-specific exams in platforms like Mercer Mettl. The role also handles Moodle updates, including setting up specialised exam links with extra restrictions and uploading accessible Word versions of exam papers.

## Library

The Library Team contacts all students on the register at the start of each semester regarding available library support.

## Facilities/Timetables:

The Facilities and Timetables Teams ensure accessible rooms.

## IT

The IT Department provides technical resources to support staff/PA.

## Students

Students play an active role in their disability support by taking responsibility for initiating contact with the Disability Service, either directly or through referral. They are expected to submit the completed Disability Support Form with all necessary documentation and actively engage in the needs extra provision process. Furthermore, students must comply with their approved reasonable accommodations, notify the Disability Service of any changes in their needs, and use a provided template to communicate with lecturers, ensuring the Disability and Inclusion Officer is copied.

### 4.4.6 Confidentiality and Data Protection

Compliance with GDPR and Data Protection Acts is paramount in managing disability-related information. This means meticulously handling how personal and sensitive data regarding a student's disability is collected, stored, shared, and managed. All pertinent documents are securely uploaded to

a dedicated Disability Support folder, organised by individual student numbers. Furthermore, clear protocols for obtaining student consent are strictly followed before sharing any information about their disability or accommodations with relevant staff. Importantly, disclosure is always limited to a "need-to-know" basis, ensuring information is only shared when absolutely necessary to facilitate the provision of accommodations.

#### 4.4.7 Additional Information

The learner support page on the DBS website provides further information:

<https://students.dbs.ie/dbs-student-services/disabilities-support>

## 4.5 Accessibility Policy

| <div> <div>Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) Part B</div> <div>  </div> </div> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Document Name</b>                                                                                                                                             | Accessibility Policy                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Policy Document Number</b>                                                                                                                                    | 052                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Version Reference</b>                                                                                                                                         | V1.0                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Document Owner</b>                                                                                                                                            | Chief Operating Officer & Registrar                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Roles with Aligned Responsibility</b>                                                                                                                         | Head of IT, Chief Academic & Innovation Officer, Head of Academic Information and Resource Centre                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Applicability</b>                                                                                                                                             | All programmes: NFQ L6 to L9, Professional Programmes, Study Abroad, DBS Online                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Approved By</b>                                                                                                                                               | Academic Board                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Approval Date</b>                                                                                                                                             | 24/06/2025                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Date Policy Becomes Active</b>                                                                                                                                | 24/06/2025                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Revision Cycle</b>                                                                                                                                            | A minimum of every five years from approval date                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Revision History/Amalgamation History</b>                                                                                                                     | N/A                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Additional Information</b>                                                                                                                                    | N/A                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>References/ Supporting Documentation</b>                                                                                                                      | Hidden Disabilities (2025) <i>Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Initiative</i> . <sup>16</sup><br>European Accessibility Act (2025) <sup>17</sup><br>QQI (2023) Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended and Fully online Programmes 2023. |

### 4.5.1 Policy Overview

Dublin Business School is committed to creating an inclusive and equitable environment where everyone, including individuals with disabilities, has the opportunity to thrive. This means ensuring equal access to all aspects of College life – our buildings, digital resources, teaching and learning and support services. We strive to proactively identify and remove barriers, working towards a campus that embraces diversity and empowers individuals to reach their full potential.

### 4.5.2 Policy Statement

Our accessibility efforts are guided by the following principles:

- **Dignity and Respect:** Treating all individuals with dignity and respect, recognising their unique needs and contributions.
- **Equity:** Ensuring equitable access to all opportunities and resources, regardless of disability.

<sup>16</sup> <https://hdsunflower.com/>

<sup>17</sup> [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/disability/union-equality-strategy-rights-persons-disabilities-2021-2030/european-accessibility-act\\_en#european-accessibility-act](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/disability/union-equality-strategy-rights-persons-disabilities-2021-2030/european-accessibility-act_en#european-accessibility-act)

- **Inclusion:** Actively fostering an inclusive environment where individuals with disabilities feel welcome, valued, and able to participate fully.
- **Universal Design:** Striving to design and implement services, facilities, and resources that are inherently accessible to the widest range of users, without the need for adaptation or specialised design.
- **Reasonable Accommodation:** Providing reasonable accommodations (referred to locally in DBS as Needs Extra Provisions [NEP]) to individuals with disabilities to ensure equal access and participation, where universal design alone may not suffice.
- **Proactive Approach:** Taking a proactive approach to identifying and removing barriers to accessibility, rather than solely reacting to individual requests.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Regularly reviewing and updating our policies, practices, and facilities to enhance accessibility.

### 4.5.3 Physical Accessibility

- **New Constructions and Renovations:** All new buildings and major renovation projects will adhere to the highest standards of accessibility, exceeding minimum building regulations where feasible, incorporating principles of universal design.
- **Existing Infrastructure:** Regular audits of existing physical infrastructure are undertaken to identify and address accessibility barriers, prioritising modifications based on impact and feasibility.
- **Emergency Procedures:** Emergency evacuation procedures are accessible and clearly communicated to all individuals, with specific provisions for those with disabilities.

### 4.5.4 IT Accessibility

- **Web Accessibility:** All new and redesigned websites and digital content will comply with the legislative updates to the European Accessibility Act (2025) regarding websites and digital services. Existing websites will be progressively updated to meet this standard.
- **Learning Management Systems (LMS) and Online Resources:** All content uploaded to the LMS is created with accessibility in mind (e.g., proper heading structures, alternative text for images, captions for videos). Faculty and staff receive training on creating accessible digital content.
- **Software and Applications:** DBS prioritises the procurement of accessible software and applications.

#### 4.5.5 Teaching, Learning, and Assessment

- **Curriculum Design:** Academic departments will incorporate universal design principles into curriculum development, ensuring diverse learning styles and needs are considered.
- **Teaching Practices:** Faculty will be encouraged and supported to adopt inclusive teaching practices, including varied instructional methods, flexible assessment options, and accessible learning materials. Training will be provided on inclusive pedagogy.
- **Assessment:** Assessment methods will be flexible and accessible, allowing students to demonstrate their learning in various ways. Reasonable accommodations for assessments will be provided in a timely manner.
- **Academic Support:** Dedicated academic support services (e.g., Disability Support Service, Library Team, SESU) will provide tailored support, advice, and reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities.

#### 4.5.6 Services and Facilities

- **Admissions:** The admissions process will be accessible and non-discriminatory, with clear information provided regarding support services for students with disabilities.
- **Student Support Services:** All student support services (e.g., counselling, careers, health) will be accessible.
- **Library Services:** Library resources and services will be accessible, including accessible study spaces.
- **Extracurricular Activities:** Efforts will be made to ensure that all extracurricular activities and student societies are inclusive and accessible.

#### 4.5.7 Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Initiative

The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower is an initiative that gives individuals the tool to share that they may have a disability that is not visible. DBS has become the first educational provider in Ireland to join the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower initiative. This partnership means that students at DBS can choose to wear a Sunflower lanyard, wristband, or pin to discreetly indicate they have a non-visible disability.

Key points for an accessibility policy:

- **Recognition of Non-Visible Disabilities:** DBS formally recognises the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower, providing a visual cue for students with non-visible disabilities.
- **Student Support:** Students can voluntarily wear Sunflower items to signal their non-visible disability, enabling staff to offer appropriate support.

- **Staff Training:** DBS Faculty and Staff receive training on understanding invisible disabilities and how to best support students wearing the Sunflower. All new staff will be trained during their induction.
- **Promotion and Awareness:** The DBS Disability and Inclusion Officer and the Well-being Officer of the DBS Students' Union will actively promote and support this initiative among the student population.

#### 4.5.8 Complaints

Any individual who believes they have experienced discrimination on the grounds of disability or encountered an accessibility barrier that has not been adequately addressed should follow the institution's formal complaints procedure, which is set out in the Quality Assurance Handbook Part B Section 3 Learner Conduct Appeals and Complaints.

## 4.6 Policy on Misuse of Student Identification Cards

| <b>Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) Part B Section 4</b> |                                                                                                                                                           |  |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Document Name</b>                                     | Policy on Misuse of Student Identification Cards                                                                                                          |                                                                                     |
| <b>Policy Document Number</b>                            | 053                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                     |
| <b>Version Reference</b>                                 | v1.0                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                     |
| <b>Document Owner</b>                                    | Head of Academic Operations                                                                                                                               |                                                                                     |
| <b>Roles with Aligned Responsibility</b>                 | Programme Coordinator, Academic Operations Team Manager, Faculty, School Administrative Officer, Assistant Registrar, Chief Operating Officer & Registrar |                                                                                     |
| <b>Applicability</b>                                     | All programmes: NFQ L6–9, Professional Programmes, Study Abroad, DBS Online                                                                               |                                                                                     |
| <b>Approved By</b>                                       | Academic Board                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                     |
| <b>Approval Date</b>                                     | 25/09/2025                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                     |
| <b>Date Policy Becomes Active</b>                        | 29/09/2025                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                     |
| <b>Revision Cycle</b>                                    | A minimum of every five years from approval date                                                                                                          |                                                                                     |
| <b>Revision History/Amalgamation History</b>             | n/a                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                     |
| <b>Additional Information</b>                            | n/a                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                     |
| <b>References/ Supporting Documentation</b>              | n/a                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                     |

### 4.6.1 Policy Overview

This policy addresses the unauthorized use of student identification (ID) cards for attendance scanning and outlines the disciplinary actions and procedures to be followed.

### 4.6.2 Policy Statement

The use of a student ID card by anyone other than the cardholder to register attendance is strictly prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to, scanning a fellow student's card or allowing another student to scan your card. Such actions undermine the integrity of the attendance system and are considered a serious breach of academic regulations.

### 4.6.3 Procedure

When a student ID card is found to be used by someone other than the rightful cardholder, or if a card is handed in by a lecturer or staff member due to suspected misuse, the card will be immediately confiscated. Following confiscation, the ID numbers of all involved cards will be recorded and a formal warning will be issued to the student or students involved. A permanent note will also be made upon any learner(s) involved records.

Subsequently, all confiscated cards related to the incident, encompassing both the card of the student caught scanning for others and any cards they were attempting to scan, will be destroyed.

The Head of Academic Operations will undertake a review on a case by case basis to determine if formal disciplinary proceedings should be initiated in accordance with the established Disciplinary Policy. Further information on the Disciplinary Policy can be found in the Quality Assurance Handbook Part B Section 3,

Students whose identification cards have been confiscated and destroyed will be formally notified that their card has been destroyed. To obtain a replacement card, students must purchase one directly from the Service Desk. It's important to note that no replacement cards will be issued free of charge in cases involving misuse.

For further information on the Learner Code of Conduct, please refer to the Quality Assurance Handbook Part B Section 3.2 Learner Code of Conduct Policy.

## 4.7 Learner Protection Policy: Centre Withdrawal

| <b>Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) Part B Section 4</b> |                                                                                                                                                                    |  |
|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Document Name</b>                                     | Learner Protection Policy: Centre Withdrawal                                                                                                                       |                                                                                     |
| <b>Policy Document Number</b>                            | 056                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                     |
| <b>Version Reference</b>                                 | v1.0                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                     |
| <b>Document Owner</b>                                    | Chief Operating Officer & Registrar                                                                                                                                |                                                                                     |
| <b>Roles with Aligned Responsibility</b>                 | Head of Academic Operations, Programme Coordinator, Academic Operations Team Manager, Faculty, Assistant Registrar, Academic Director. Assistant Academic Director |                                                                                     |
| <b>Applicability</b>                                     | Kaplan Professional Award Diploma in Accounting and Finance                                                                                                        |                                                                                     |
| <b>Approved By</b>                                       | Academic Board                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                     |
| <b>Approval Date</b>                                     | 16/07/2026                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                     |
| <b>Date Policy Becomes Active</b>                        | 17/07/2026                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                     |
| <b>Revision Cycle</b>                                    | A minimum of every five years from approval date                                                                                                                   |                                                                                     |
| <b>Revision History/Amalgamation History</b>             | n/a                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                     |
| <b>Additional Information</b>                            | n/a                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                     |
| <b>References/ Supporting Documentation</b>              | n/a                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                     |

### 4.7.1 Policy Overview

This policy outlines the commitment and procedures of Dublin Business School to protect the non-financial interests of our learners on the Kaplan Professional Award Diploma in Accounting and Finance in the event of a decision to withdraw a programme or cease operations entirely. The primary objective is to ensure learners experience minimal disruption and are fully supported in completing their studies or transitioning to an alternative provider. This policy specifically details how learner registrations will be managed during any announced withdrawal period.

### 4.7.2 Policy Scope

This policy applies to all learners currently registered on the Kaplan Professional Award Diploma in Accounting and Finance programme at Dublin Business School as well as all academic and administrative staff involved in the management and delivery of the programme.

### 4.7.3 Core Principles

Dublin Business School is committed to the following principles during any withdrawal process:

- **Transparency:** We will communicate openly, clearly, and in a timely manner with all affected learners regarding the reasons for the withdrawal, the timeline, and the options available to them.
- **Continuity of Learning:** Our foremost goal is to provide a clear pathway for every learner to complete their programme. This will be achieved through a formal "teach-out" plan or through supporting learners to find a suitable transfer option to another programme/provider.
- **Fairness and Equity:** All learners will be treated fairly and equitably, with consideration given to their individual circumstances, progression stage, and support needs.
- **Support:** We will provide robust academic and pastoral support to learners throughout the transition period to reduce uncertainty and provide appropriate direction to those who are impacted
- **Data Integrity:** All learner records, including transcripts of results, attendance, and assessments, will be securely maintained, and learners will be guaranteed access to them.

#### 4.7.4 Management of Learner Registrations

Upon the formal decision to withdraw the programme:

1. **Cessation of New Registrations:** Dublin Business School will immediately cease accepting any new applications or registrations for the affected programme. This is to ensure no new learners are placed in a position of uncertainty.
2. **Management of Current Registrations:** For all currently registered learners, a clear plan will be implemented based on the following options:
  - **Teach-Out Plan:** Dublin Business School will, wherever feasible, continue to run the programme for the existing cohort until all currently registered learners have had the opportunity to complete their qualification. During this teach-out period, the Centre guarantees to:
    - Maintain the same quality of teaching, resources, and learner support.
    - Ensure all scheduled assessments and examinations proceed as planned.
    - Continue to meet all requirements of the relevant awarding body.
  - **Supported Transfer Plan:** If a teach-out plan is not viable, Dublin Business School will take active responsibility for helping learners transfer to a comparable programme at another accredited institution. This support includes:
    - Identifying suitable alternative providers.

- Providing learners with official transcripts, academic references, and a statement of attainment.
- Offering guidance and administrative support throughout the transfer application process.

#### 4.7.5 Management of Learner Withdrawals

Should a withdrawal be necessary, Dublin Business School will execute the following steps:

1. Formal Notification: All affected learners and relevant awarding bodies will be formally notified in writing (via email and official letter) of the decision. This communication will include the detailed timeline, the proposed teach-out or transfer plan, and key contact information for support.
2. Learner Consultation: We will hold group meetings and offer one-on-one appointments with every affected learner to discuss the plan, answer questions, and understand their individual needs and preferences.
3. Plan Implementation: The agreed-upon teach-out or transfer plan will be officially implemented.
4. Issuing of Records: Upon completion or transfer, every learner will be issued with their final academic transcript and any certificate of completion or attendance earned.

**[END OF PART B SECTION 4]**