

Independent Panel Report on a Provider's Programme Review

Provider	Dublin Business School
Programme(s) Reviewed	Higher Diploma in Business

Independent Panel Members

Name	Role on Panel	Affiliation
Dr. John Bartlett	Chair	ATU
Dr. Joe Fitzgerald	Report Writer	TU Dublin
Dr. Dinusha Weerawardane	Academic Expert	University of West London
Matthias Glowatz	Academic Expert	UCD
Lenka Vrancikova	Learner Rep	Dundalk IT
Elizabeth Sheehan	Industry Rep	Ad Net Zero

All members of the independent panel declared their independence of Dublin Business School and that they have no conflict of interest

Part 1. Introduction

This programme review will be undertaken in accordance with DBS's internal quality assurance processes, which are informed by QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines (pp 11-12) and Programme Review Manual 2022.

This review of this programme was undertaken by the DBS's School of Business. Many of the current teaching staff have been involved in the delivery of the programme for a number of years, so they had the benefit of clear understanding of the programme description, learning outcomes and understanding of the benefits for students of the programme structure.

Part 2. Evaluation Process

2.1 Documents Supplied to the Panel

	Document Type	Document Name
1.	Programme Review Report	Higher Diploma Business_Programme Review Report
2.	Programme Document	Higher Diploma Business_Programme Doc
3.	Programme Modules	Higher Diploma Business_Module & Assessment Doc
4.	Programme CVs	Higher Diploma Business_Programme Team CVs
5.	Teaching & Learning Strategy	Higher Diploma Business_Teaching and Learning Strategy 2024
6.	Programme Handbook	Higher Diploma Business_Programme Handbook 2425

2.2 Provider's Representatives Met

	Person	Role / Job Title
1.	Tim Bicknell	President
2.	Lori Johnston	Academic Dean
3.	Dr. Rita Day	Academic Director
4.	Tanya Zubrzycki	Assistant Academic Director
5.	Shane Mooney	Head of Student Experience
6.	Darragh Breathnach	Registrar & Director of Campus Operations
7.	Emma Balfe	Head of Teaching Delivery and Content Production
8.	Grant Goodwin	Assistant Registrar
9.	Various Faculty Members	Lecturer

2.3 Description of evaluation process

As a result of the unprecedented shifts in the nature of educational delivery post-Covid arising from technological developments (including the emergence of artificial intelligence and remote working/learning), the challenges to ensuring that we meet the increasingly diverse expectations of the learner are significant. Faculty have been at the coalface of these issues and so regular engagement takes place to discuss the many issues associated with these developments on an ongoing

basis, such as regular programme team meetings. The programme review process has been multifaceted in its approach.

Firstly, the existing Academic Team, including the Academic Director and the Assistant Academic Director are in regular consultation with faculty to discuss the nature of the programme and to question how the current programme can be modified and updated to reflect the complex and diverse changes in the world of business and marketing. With this in mind, programme team meetings form an integral part of this process and are conducted several times a year. These allow lecturers to explain the dynamics which are unfolding in the teaching environment and to question and debate how changes can be made accordingly, in all aspects of the design, delivery and assessment of the programme.

Secondly, DBS engages regularly with industry practitioners and business professionals for many reasons. The importance of developing relationships and links with those within the industry is becoming a significant priority for the learner. The Industry Advisory Board is an active forum which fosters discussion and debate between DBS academic staff and several industry professionals, some of whom are actively engaged in senior business roles within the industry. These meetings, which occur 3-4 times per year, are an important mechanism for discussing how to create links between learners and industry.

Thirdly, the academic management team has ensured that the perspectives of learners are taken into account by designing a qualitative learner survey and engaging with feedback from the class rep meetings. The results within this document are referenced when making overall decisions concerning the needs of the contemporary business learner.

Finally, the Academic programme team is in continual contact with internal stakeholders to ensure that the programme design aligns with the various functions within the organisation. This includes regular and ongoing discussions with the DBS Teaching and Learning Unit. This unit has become a vital part of decision-making for programme revalidations and curriculum development, assessment trends and responses to issues around generative AI and how best to consider responses to such developments.

Part 3. Panel Findings on Provider Programme Review Report

The following is the panel's commentary and recommendations on the provider's programme review report. It follows the section structure of the report in headings and in sequence.

References to specific parts of the provider report will use the relevant report reference e.g. 2.2.4 Programme Management

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

Commentary:

The Independent Evaluation Panel has been convened to evaluate the programmatic review conducted by DBS in respect of the Higher Diploma in Business, and to make a recommendation on the suitability of the revised programmes for revalidation.

The revised programme will continue to lead to a Higher Diploma at level 8 on the National Framework of Qualification (NFQ). It will be offered on a full-time, part-time and a blended delivery model.

The provider's own programmatic review found some proposed modifications were appropriate which the Panel was generally satisfied were appropriate.

Recommendations:

n/a

Section B. Provider Information and Programme Context

Commentary:

Comprehensive information provided on the provider and where these programmes resides within the provider's operations, specifically its Business Faculty. DBS was also very clear as to how the programme is situated within its organisational and governance structures.

DBS detailed the programme objectives and MIPLOs, which the panel agreed was appropriate for the programme.

Recommendations:

n/a

Section C. Baseline qualitative and quantitative information

Programme Data Overview

This section will include the panel's views on any or all of the following topics covered in the provider's review report: Applications, Enrolment, Attrition Transfer and Progression, Award Classification and Graduate Destinations

Commentary:

The programme review report details the applications for the programme, which has ranged from 75 to 113 in the past 5 years, as well as actual enrolments. Part-time enrolments have been notably higher for the past two years (50 and 46 versus 12 and 10 for full-time enrolments). The full-time and part-time cohorts are quite different, with the full-time cohorts being primarily younger or international students, whereas the part-time cohort tends to be older and of Irish nationality.

As this is a one-year programme, there is no 'progression' but rather completion of the programme is the concern. Of those who enrolled, approximately 80% successfully completed the programme in the year they enrolled. DBS was satisfied with this completion rate.

DBS records data for its graduate destinations and takes part in the HEA Graduate Outcomes Survey. DBS also keeps detailed records of attendance, and can break this down by attendance per module. During the transition to online teaching during the COVID pandemic, DBS did note that it had initial challenges integrating online teaching with its attendance system, but that these issues have now been rectified.

Recommendations:

Programme Delivery and Teaching & Learning Strategies

This section will include the panel's views on any or all of the following topics covered in the provider's review report: Physical Facilities and Resources, Timetabling, Learner Workload, Attendance, Teacher Learner Ratios, Community of Practice Learning, Teaching and Learning Strategies, Learning Outcomes achieved, Assessment Strategies.

Commentary:

The evaluation of the programme delivery and T&L strategies incorporated feedback from learners and graduates. Key points from this feedback were a need for greater balance of workload across modules, replace the Business Strategy Capstone module, more applied learning and progression opportunities. However, the overall sentiment for the programme was positive. DBS states that it will fully incorporate the main points from the feedback

attained. Although the panel is generally in agreement with most of these points, it does note that there seems to be little reflection on these points. Specifically, the decision taken to replace the Business Strategy Capstone, in tandem with the decision to replace Strategic Marketing with Global Marketing, removes much of the 'strategy' content from the programme.

Recommendations:

To revise the decision to remove the Business Strategy Capstone module and retain this in the revalidated programme.

Section D. Evaluation of the programme by stakeholders

Evaluation by current learners and graduates of the programme

Commentary:

Feedback from learners and graduates was evident throughout the programme review and not just confined to section 4 of the report. The evaluation presented high level evaluation of the programme. In general, this was positive in nature and indicated for a hybrid delivery model. Though the analysis in Section 4 was quite brief, as mentioned, there was evident of learner and graduate evaluation in other sections of the report.

Recommendations:

n/a

Evaluation of the programme by Staff

Commentary:

Programme staff provide regular feedback through the formal mechanisms in place (programme boards, exam boards etc.). Though the discussion in section 4.2 is limited, the report in general shows the active contribution of programme staff. This was reinforced during the panel's site visit, during which the teaching demonstrated a strong level of coordination, with many faculty noting where their module contributes to another or how another module builds on theirs.

Recommendations:

n/a

External Examiner Feedback

Commentary:

External Examiner feedback has been broadly positive. Where some issues were highlighted, there was evidence of the provider addressing this.

Recommendations:

n/a

Section E. Programme Quality Assurance

Complaints, appeals and commendations

Commentary:

The provider has robust QA policies in place at an institutional and programme level. These policies are clear, fair and transparent. The report details these and provides links to DBS's QA policies in these areas.

Recommendations:

n/a

Quality Assurance Systems and Processes

Commentary:

The report is clear in how this programme fits within DBS's overarching QA system, but also the programme specific QA. The key policies relevant for this programme are clearly outlined.

Recommendations:

n/a

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

Commentary:

The blended learning model intended for this programme is clearly documented throughout.

Recommendations:

n/a

Section F. Summary Analysis of the programme

Commentary:

The programme review summary analysis is coherent with the analysis undertaken as part of the programme review and other sections presented in the report.

Recommendations:

n/a

Section G. Revision of the programme

In this section the panel will respond to any proposals made by the provider in respect of changes to the programme arising from the review. The revised programme's readiness for validation will be reported on in more detail in the Independent Evaluation Report for Validation.

Commentary:

Section 7 outlines the main changes suggested for the programme. The panel is broadly supportive of these changes, with the exception of the removal of the Strategic Marketing and Business Strategy (Capstone) modules. Taken in tandem, it is the view of the panel that the net result is most of the 'strategy' content has been lost from the programme.

Recommendations:

To revise the decision to remove the Business Strategy Capstone module and retain this in the revalidated programme.

Part 4. Overall Findings

In this section the panel will give its overall feedback on the conduct of the review and the findings therein. This feedback will inform future provider review processes and will also contribute to the refinement of any programmes being proposed for revalidation following this review process.

Section A. Commentary on review process:

The review process undertaken by the provider was extensive, comprehensive and completed with the clear goal of improving the programme.

Section B. Recommendations on review process:

The volume of material produced by the provider is commendable, and clearly indicative of the thoroughness of the review process undertaken. However, the scale of the material provided might have been structured to differentiate between core material and supplemental evidence to enable the Panel's effective engagement within the short time timeframe of the review/revalidation event. Though the process is clearly robust and inclusive, the workload it presents to panels is significant.

The focus should be on retaining the robustness of the system, but reducing the administrative burden on both the provider and panels.

Section C. Commentary on programme revisions:

The panel is satisfied with the programme revisions put forward, with the exception of the removal of both Strategic Marketing and Business Strategy (Capstone) modules.

Section D. Recommendations on programme revisions:

The panel supports the proposed programme revisions and one further condition of validation, which should be addressed prior to this programme being revalidated.

Signed: John Darbyll
Panel Chairperson:

Date: 16/05/2024

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

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

Part 1. Provider details

Provider name	Dublin Business School
Date of site visit	18/04/2024
Date of report	15/05/2024

Section A. Overall recommendations

Principal programme	Title	Higher Diploma in Business
	Award	Major
	Credit	60
	Recommendation <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory</i>	Satisfactory subject to proposed condition

Section B. Expert Panel

Name	Role	Affiliation
Dr. John Bartlett	Chair	ATU
Dr. Joe Fitzgerald	Report Writer	TU Dublin
Dr. Dinusha Weerawardane	Academic Expert	University of West London
Matthias Glowatz	Academic Expert	UCD
Lenka Vrancikova	Learner Rep	Dundalk IT
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Section C. Principal Programme

Names of centre(s) where the programme(s) is to be provided	Maximum number of learners (<i>per centre</i>)	Minimum number of learners
Dublin Business School	2700 per annum	20

Proposed Enrolment	
Date of first intake	September 2024
Maximum number of annual intakes	3
Maximum total number of learners per intake	900 (450 f/t; 450 p/t)
Programme duration (<i>months from start to completion</i>)	12 months
Panel Commentary on proposed enrolment:	
<p>The numbers provided are standard for DBS. However, during the panel visit, they noted that they do not expect to have numbers near the maximum of this range. They anticipate enrolments in line, and perhaps slightly above, previous years.</p>	
Target learner groups	
<p>The Higher Diploma in Business targets learners with a Level 8 degree in a non-cognate area who wish to specialise in the field of business and business administration with a view to entering industry, progressing professionally or to undertake postgraduate studies in a related field. The programme provides the learner with the fundamental skills of business administration enabling them to play an active role in the management, sustainability and development of commercial enterprise.</p> <p>On completion of this programme, learners will have acquired the necessary skills and business acumen to strategically appraise business opportunities and challenges and effectively integrate into decision-making roles with an organisation. The Higher Diploma in Business develops graduates capable of dealing strategically with diverse intrinsic and extrinsic opportunities and challenges in the business world and who do so in a creative fashion promoting business sustainability and growth.</p>	
Approved countries for provision	Ireland
Delivery mode: Full-time/Part-time	Full-time; Part-time; Blended
The teaching and learning modalities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to Face • Online • Blended 	

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

The Higher Diploma in Business is a one year full-time (two academic semesters) or eighteen months (three academic semesters) part-time programme with 12 taught modules (60 ECTS). All modules are mandatory and equal 5 ECTS.

The programme is designed as a conversion course for graduates of a Level 8 non-cognate degree who aspire to enter the business world and to enter a management role. Graduates will be eligible for general management roles or management roles within a specific subfield of business complimenting their previous experience and learning.

The programme is designed with an interdisciplinary focus reflective of the opportunities and challenges as well as the changing needs of today's business environment. Modules on the programme range from Management and Organisational Behaviour, Marketing, Business ICT, Legal Issues for Business, Economics, Human Capital Management, Business Finance, Innovation, Creativity and Enterprise, and a capstone Professional Skills for Personal Development to the newly added Operations Management, Supply Chain Management and Business Sustainability. Modules comprise of formative and summative assessment as well as group work and presentations.

The programme is aimed at both domestic and international learners who seek an underpinning in key business theories, concepts as well as business processes, strategies and skills. The programme ensures learners acquire an integrated, balanced, and dynamic business education enabling the development of business knowledge, including previously acquired knowledge and experience. The programme engenders an awareness of the importance of transferable and cross enterprise skills required of competitive organisations and which stimulate sustainable and diverse careers in business.

The Higher Diploma in Business also permits entry to further Higher Education Institutions or to a number of Level 9 Business programmes such as the MSc Management Practice, MSc Marketing, MSc in Supply Chain Management and Master of Business Administration.

Summary of specifications for teaching staff	WTE
<p>Lecturing staff will have a minimum of a Level 9 Postgraduate Diploma or Masters in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Business · Human Resource Management · Law · Accounting and/or Finance · Management · Marketing · Innovation and Entrepreneurship · Economics · ICT <p>Individuals with Level 8 honours bachelor degrees in the above disciplines, who are exceptionally qualified by virtue of significant senior industry experience may also be considered.</p>	0.86

Learning Activity	Ratio of learners to teaching staff
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Classroom Sessions	1/150
Online Lectures	1/150
Workshops	1/40
Practical Sessions	1/40
Panel Commentary on programme outline and staffing:	
The panel is satisfied with the staffing in place and the details of the programme outline.	

Programmes being replaced (applicable to applications for revalidation)		
Code	Title	Last enrolment date
PG24181	Higher Diploma in Business	August 2024

Section D. Other noteworthy features of the application

n/a

Part 1A Evaluation of the Case for an Extension of the Approved Scope of Provision (where applicable). Having examined appropriate QA / Governance procedures, comment on the case for extending the applicant's Approved Scope of Provision to enable provision of this programme. (Especially relevant for move to online delivery / assessment)

The formalising of the delivery model as a blended delivery is appropriate and the provider has established QA processes in place to ensure the successful delivery of the programme.

Part 2. Evaluation against the validation criteria

The panel should complete this section with commentary against each criterion to support the recommendation given in the 'Satisfactory?' column i.e. Yes, No, or Partially.

If 'Yes', there should be a comment citing the evidence for this finding. Likewise, there should be an explanation as to why the panel have concluded that the criterion has either not been met or only partially so.

Criterion 1. The provider is eligible to apply for validation of the programme

<p>a) The provider meets the prerequisites (section 44(7) of the 2012 Act) to apply for validation of the programme.</p> <p>b) The application for validation is signed by the provider's chief executive (or equivalent) who confirms that the information provided is truthful and that all the applicable criteria have been addressed.</p> <p>c) The provider has declared that their programme complies with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.¹</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Yes	DBS will deliver this programme under its approved Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures. DBS meets the pre-requisites under Section 44 (7) of the 2012 Act to apply for validation of the programme. This was confirmed to the panel during the site visit.

¹This criterion is to ensure the programme can actually be provided and will not be halted on account of breach of the law. The declaration is sought to ensure this is not overlooked but QQI is not responsible for verifying this declaration of enforcing such requirements.

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

- a) The programme aims and objectives are expressed plainly.
 - b) A QQI award is specified for those who complete the programme.
 - (i) Where applicable, a QQI award is specified for each embedded programme.
 - c) There is a satisfactory rationale for the choice of QQI award(s).
 - d) The award title(s) is consistent with unit 3.1 of QQI's *Policy and Criteria for Making Awards*.
 - e) The award title(s) is otherwise legitimate for example it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.
 - f) The programme title and any embedded programme titles are
 - (i) Consistent with the title of the QQI award sought.
 - (ii) Clear, accurate, succinct and fit for the purpose of informing prospective learners and other stakeholders.
 - g) For each programme and embedded programme
 - (i) The **minimum intended programme learning outcomes** and any other educational or training objectives of the programme are explicitly specified.²
 - (ii) The minimum intended programme learning outcomes to qualify for the QQI award sought are **consistent with** the relevant QQI awards standards.
 - h) Where applicable, the **minimum intended module learning outcomes** are explicitly specified for each of the programme's modules.
 - i) Any QQI minor awards sought for those who complete the modules are specified, where applicable.
- For each minor award specified, the minimum intended module learning outcomes to qualify for the award are consistent with relevant QQI minor awards standards.³

	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Yes	The panel discussed with the provider how the programme has operated and how the planned revalidated programme retains much of the previous programme objectives and outcomes. The panel is satisfied that these are still fit for purpose and appropriate for this programme.

² Other programme objectives, for example, may be to meet the educational or training requirements of a statutory, regulatory or professional body.

³ Not all modules will warrant minor awards. Minor awards feature strongly in the QQI common awards system however further education and training awards may be made outside this system.

Criterion 3. The programme concept, implementation strategy, and its interpretation of QQI awards standards are well informed and soundly based (considering social, cultural, educational, professional and employment objectives)

- a) The development of the programme and the intended programme learning outcomes has sought out and taken into account the views of stakeholders such as learners, graduates, teachers, lecturers, education and training institutions, employers, statutory bodies, regulatory bodies, the international scientific and academic communities, professional bodies and equivalent associations, trades unions, and social and community representatives.⁴
- b) The interpretation of awards standards has been adequately informed and researched; considering the programme aims and objectives and minimum intended programme (and, where applicable, modular) learning outcomes.
 - (i) There is a satisfactory rationale for providing the programme.
 - (ii) The proposed programme compares favourably with existing related (comparable) programmes in Ireland and beyond. Comparators should be as close as it is possible to find.
 - (iii) There is support for the introduction of the programme (such as from employers, or professional, regulatory or statutory bodies).
 - (iv) There is evidence⁵ of learner demand for the programme.
 - (v) There is evidence of employment opportunities for graduates where relevant⁶.
 - (vi) The programme meets genuine education and training needs.⁷
- c) There are mechanisms to keep the programme updated in consultation with internal and external stakeholders.
- d) Employers and practitioners in the cases of vocational and professional awards have been systematically involved in the programme design where the programme is vocationally or professionally oriented.
- e) The programme satisfies any validation-related criteria attaching to the applicable awards standards and QQI awards specifications.

	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Yes	<p>The programme documentation and QA Manual outline the various feedback channels in place to obtain stakeholder feedback. Stakeholder engagement was evident with DBS learners, graduates, faculty and employers to attain a rounded perspective and evaluation of the programme.</p> <p>A rationale for continued provision of the programme has been provided and the Panel is satisfied that DBS has demonstrated sufficient demand for the programme.</p>

⁴ Awards standards however detailed rely on various communities for their interpretation. This consultation is necessary if the programme is to enable learners to achieve the standard in its fullest sense.

⁵ This might be predictive or indirect.

⁶ It is essential to involve employers in the programme development and review process when the programme is vocationally or professionally oriented.

⁷ There is clear evidence that the programme meets the **target learners'** education and training needs and that there is a clear demand for the programme.

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

<p>a) The information about the programme as well as its procedures for access, transfer and progression are consistent with the procedures described in QQI's policy and criteria for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners for providers of further and higher education and training. Each of its programme-specific criteria is individually and explicitly satisfied⁸.</p> <p>b) Programme information for learners is provided in plain language. This details what the programme expects of learners and what learners can expect of the programme and that there are procedures to ensure its availability in a range of accessible formats.</p> <p>c) If the programme leads to a higher education and training award and its duration is designed for native English speakers, then the level of proficiency in English language must be greater or equal to B2+ in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR⁹) in order to enable learners to reach the required standard for the QQI award.</p> <p>d) The programme specifies the learning (knowledge, skill and competence) that target learners are expected to have achieved before they are enrolled in the programme and any other assumptions about enrolled learners (programme participants).</p> <p>e) The programme includes suitable procedures and criteria for the recognition of prior learning for the purposes of access and, where appropriate, for advanced entry to the programme and for exemptions.</p> <p>f) The programme title (the title used to refer to the programme):-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Reflects the core <i>intended programme learning outcomes</i>, and is consistent with the standards and purposes of the QQI awards to which it leads, the award title(s) and their class(es). (ii) Is learner focused and meaningful to the learners; (iii) Has long-lasting significance. <p>g) The programme title is otherwise legitimate; for example, it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Yes	<p>Access Transfer and Progression criteria and arrangements for progression are outlined in Section 4 of the programme documentation and these procedures are consistent with QQI’s policy and criteria.</p> <p>The provider has also detailed progression options to and from this programme, and detailed this during the panel visit.</p> <p>The panel is satisfied that DBS’s access, transfer and progression arrangements for this programme are clear, transparent and fit for purpose.</p>

⁸ Each of the detailed criteria set out in the Policy and criteria for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners for providers of further and higher education and training must be addressed in the provider’s evaluation report. The detailed criteria are (QQI, restated 2015) arranged under the headings

- Progression and transfer routes
- Entry arrangements
- Information provision

⁹ http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf (accessed 26/09/2015)

Criterion 5. The programme’s written curriculum is well structured and fit-for-purpose

- a) The programme is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of its intended programme learning outcomes. The programme (including any stages and modules) is integrated in all its dimensions.
- b) In so far as it is feasible the programme provides choice to enrolled learners so that they may align their learning opportunities towards their individual educational and training needs.
- c) Each module and stage is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of the intended *programme* learning outcomes.
- d) The objectives and purposes of each of the programme’s elements are clear to learners and to the provider’s staff.
- e) The programme is structured and scheduled realistically based on sound educational and training principles¹⁰.
- f) The curriculum is comprehensively and systematically documented.
- g) The credit allocated to the programme is consistent with the difference between the entry standard and minimum intended programme learning outcomes.
- h) The credit allocated to each module is consistent with the difference between the module entry standard and minimum intended module learning outcomes.
- i) Elements such as practice placement and work-based phases are provided with the same rigour and attentiveness as other elements.
- j) The programme **duration** (expressed in terms of time from initial enrolment to completion) and its **fulltime equivalent contact time** (expressed in hours) are consistent with the difference between the minimum entry standard and award standard and with the credit allocation.¹¹

	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Partially	<p>The panel queried the decision of the programme team to remove the Strategic Marketing module, and replace it with a ‘Global Marketing’ module. The faculty outlined that the rationale for this decision was to give the module an international dimension and context. They further detailed that fundamental to this is an extension of the theory and case studies to a global orientation. ‘Consultancy’ is also being brought into the Global Marketing module with the view of linking theory to practice. Though the panel did not have an issue with this in isolation, it was the view of the panel that taken in combination with the removal of the Business Strategy (Capstone) module (see below), that this does result in a removal of much of the strategy content.</p> <p>The panel also queried why the Business Strategy module has been removed. The programme team outlined that they wanted to ensure equity with other business areas, and the removal of this module allowed for the addition of different content areas – such as the new modules proposed. The programme team added that student feedback confirmed that they wanted more applied content/module offering. As this module was the Capstone module, the programme team are proposing that the Professional Skills module is now the capstone. The panel asked if strategy has now been completely removed from the programme, to which the programme team responded that Business</p>

¹⁰ This applies recursively to each and every element of the programme from enrolment through to completion.

In the case of a modular programme, the pool of modules and learning pathway constraints (such as any prerequisite and co-requisite modules) is explicit and appropriate to the intended programme learning outcomes.

¹¹ If the duration is variable, for example, when advanced entry is available, this should be explained and justified

		<p>Strategy is now incorporated into all modules on the programme. However, it was the view of the panel that this was not clear in the programme documentation.</p> <p>Condition:</p> <p>Therefore, it is a condition of validation that the programme team include a compulsory module that is specifically dedicated to Business Strategy.</p> <p>The panel asked about how sustainability has been incorporated into the programme. The programme team confirmed that sustainability as a concept is incorporated not only in the Business Sustainability module, but also in other modules, such as the Business ICT module.</p>
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Criterion 6. There are sufficient qualified and capable programme staff available to implement the programme as planned

<p>a) The specification of the programme’s staffing requirements (staff required as part of the programme and intrinsic to it) is precise, and rigorous and consistent with the programme and its defined purpose. The specifications include professional and educational qualifications, licences-to practise where applicable, experience and the staff/learner ratio requirements. See also criterion 12 c).</p> <p>b) The programme has an identified complement of staff¹² (or potential staff) who are available, qualified and capable to provide the specified programme in the context of their existing commitments.</p> <p>c) The programme's complement of staff (or potential staff) (those who support learning including any employer-based personnel) are demonstrated to be competent to enable learners to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes and to assess learners’ achievements as required.</p> <p>d) There are arrangements for the performance of the programme’s staff to be managed to ensure continuing capability to fulfil their roles and there are staff development¹³ opportunities¹⁴.</p> <p>e) There are arrangements for programme staff performance to be reviewed and there are mechanisms for encouraging development and for addressing underperformance.</p> <p>f) Where the programme is to be provided by staff not already in post there are arrangements to ensure that the programme will not enrol learners unless a complement of staff meeting the specifications is in post.</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Yes	The panel met with the programme team during the site visit. Most of this team have taught on this programme for a number of years. All of the faculty that the panel met were well qualified (supported by the accommodated CVs) and demonstrated in-depth module content knowledge. DBS confirmed that it has a complement of academic staff already in place to deliver this programme.

¹² Staff here means natural persons required as part of the programme and accountable (directly or indirectly) to the programme’s provider, it may for example, include contracted trainers and workplace supervisors.

¹³ Development here is for the purpose of ensuring staff remain up-to-date on the discipline itself, on teaching methods or on other relevant skills or knowledge, to the extent that this is necessary to ensure an adequate standard of teaching.

¹⁴ Professional or vocational education and training requires that teaching staff’s professional/vocation knowledge is up to date. Being qualified in a discipline does not necessarily mean that a person is currently competent in that discipline. Therefore, performance management and development of professional and vocational staff needs to focus on professional/vocational competence as well as pedagogical competence. Professional development may include placement in industry, for example. In regulated professions it would be expected that there are a suitable number of registered practitioners involved.

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

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

	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Yes	<p>The panel discussed the physical resources that DBS currently has in place. DBS detailed the number and variety of classrooms it has available at its disposal across its campus. DBS also detailed the broad array of support it provides through its library services. These include both ‘traditional’ library services as well as Academic Writing and Study Skills supports. They also provide a number of other resources, such as exam support, pastoral support, student welfare support etc.</p> <p>Library services regularly highlight the resources available to learners and there is a facility available to learners where they can request resources that the provider does not currently have available.</p> <p>The programme document details the resources that the provider has in place, which the panel were satisfied were sufficient for the successful delivery of this programme.</p>

Criterion 8. The learning environment is consistent with the needs of the programme's learners

<p>a) The programme's physical, social, cultural and intellectual environment (recognising that the environment may, for example, be partly virtual or involve the workplace) including resources and support systems are consistent with the intended programme learning outcomes.</p> <p>b) Learners can interact with, and are supported by, others in the programme's learning environments including peer learners, teachers, and where applicable supervisors, practitioners and mentors.</p> <p>c) The programme includes arrangements to ensure that the parts of the programme that occur in the workplace are subject to the same rigours as any other part of the programme while having regard to the different nature of the workplace.</p>		
	<p>Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)</p>	<p>Comment</p>
<p>Principal Programme</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>DBS confirmed that the programme will be delivered through a full-time, part-time and blended delivery model. The programme will blend theoretical and practical elements into each module, and each module is highly applied to the workplace context.</p> <p>DBS already has sufficient classroom capacity for this programme, and it uses Moodle as its Virtual Learning Environment. The panel are content that the learning environment (both physical and virtual) that DBS has in place are sufficient for learners on this programme.</p>

Criterion 9. **There are sound teaching and learning strategies**

<p>a) The teaching strategies support achievement of the intended programme/module learning outcomes.</p> <p>b) The programme provides authentic learning opportunities to enable learners to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes.</p> <p>c) The programme enables enrolled learners to attain (if reasonably diligent) the minimum intended programme learning outcomes reliably and efficiently (in terms of overall learner effort and a reasonably balanced workload).</p> <p>d) Learning is monitored/supervised.</p> <p>e) Individualised guidance, support¹⁵ and timely formative feedback is regularly provided to enrolled learners as they progress within the programme.</p>		
	<p>Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)</p>	<p>Comment</p>
<p>Principal Programme</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>There are a variety of teaching and learning methodologies adopted for this programme, though the predominant strategy is an applied learning approach. The programme team outlined how they seek to ensure the academic content is relatable to 'real-world scenarios', and how many faculty can use their industry experience to help them apply the academic content.</p>

¹⁵ Support and feedback concerns anything material to learning in the context of the programme. For the avoidance of doubt it includes among other things any course-related language, literacy and numeracy support.

Criterion 10. **There are sound assessment strategies**

<p>a) All assessment is undertaken consistently with <i>Assessment Guidelines, Conventions and Protocols for Programmes Leading to QQI Awards</i>¹⁶</p> <p>b) The programme's assessment procedures interface effectively with the provider's QQI approved quality assurance procedures.</p> <p>c) The programme includes specific procedures that are fair and consistent for the assessment of enrolled learners to ensure the minimum intended programme/module learning outcomes are acquired by all who successfully complete the programme.¹⁷</p> <p>d) The programme includes formative assessment to support learning.</p> <p>e) There is a satisfactory written programme assessment strategy for the programme as a whole and there are satisfactory module assessment strategies for any of its constituent modules.¹⁸</p> <p>f) Sample assessment instruments, tasks, marking schemes and related evidence have been provided for each award-stage assessment and indicate that the assessment is likely to be valid and reliable.</p> <p>g) There are sound procedures for the moderation of summative assessment results.</p> <p>h) The provider only puts forward an enrolled learner for certification for a particular award for which a programme has been validated if they have been specifically assessed against the standard for that award.¹⁹</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Yes	<p>The panel discussed how DBS is considering the impact of AI in its assessments. DBS outlined that whilst AI should not be ignored or always seen as a negative, assessments are being devised to try to minimise the potential for the use of AI – such as the use of case studies, presentations, Q&A sessions etc.</p> <p>The assessment and feedback approaches, outlined in the programme document, were deemed appropriate, and the panel had no issues with this.</p>

¹⁶ See the section on transitional arrangements.

¹⁷ This assumes the minimum intended programme/module learning outcomes are consistent with the applicable awards standards.

¹⁸ The programme assessment strategy is addressed in the Assessment Guidelines, Conventions and Protocols for Programmes Leading to QQI Awards. See the section on transitional arrangements.

¹⁹ If the award is a QQI CAS compound award it is not necessarily sufficient that the learner has achieved all the components specified in the certification requirements unless at least one of those components is a capstone component (i.e. designed to test the compound learning outcomes).

Criterion 11. Learners enrolled on the programme are well informed, guided and cared for

<p>a) There are arrangements to ensure that each enrolled learner is fully informed in a timely manner about the programme including the schedule of activities and assessments.</p> <p>b) Information is provided about learner supports that are available to learners enrolled on the programme.</p> <p>c) Specific information is provided to learners enrolled on the programme about any programme-specific appeals and complaints procedures.</p> <p>d) If the programme is modular, it includes arrangements for the provision of effective guidance services for learners on the selection of appropriate learning pathways.</p> <p>e) The programme takes into account and accommodates to the differences between enrolled learners, for example, in terms of their prior learning, maturity, and capabilities.</p> <p>f) There are arrangements to ensure that learners enrolled on the programme are supervised and individualised support and due care is targeted at those who need it.</p> <p>g) The programme provides supports for enrolled learners who have special education and training needs.</p> <p>h) The programme makes reasonable accommodations for learners with disabilities²⁰.</p> <p>i) If the programme aims to enrol international students it complies with the <i>Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students</i>²¹ and there are appropriate in-service supports in areas such as English language, learning skills, information technology skills and such like, to address the particular needs of international learners and enable such learners to successfully participate in the programme.</p> <p>j) The programme's learners will be well cared for and safe while participating in the programme, (e.g. while at the provider's premises or those of any collaborators involved in provision, the programme's locations of provision including any workplace locations or practice-placement locations).</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Yes	<p>The panel met with learners, who were largely positive about their learning experience and the faculty. It was noted that when class groups were larger, that this helped the learning experience.</p> <p>However, one student noted that there were only 4 people on the programme this year (2023/24), which hampered the learning experience. This student did note that they would have preferred to be incorporated into another group, rather than stay in such a small class group.</p> <p>The learners also noted that they would prefer a lot of smaller assessments, spread out more regularly, rather than fewer, larger assessments, which can relate to the content covered long before the assessment was due.</p> <p>Also noted was an inconsistency with the use of Moodle across modules, with some lecturers using it extensively and others using it more sparsely.</p>

²⁰ For more information on making reasonable accommodations see www.AHEAD.ie and QQI's Policies, Actions and Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression for Learners (QQI, restated 2015).

²¹ See Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students (QQI, 2015)

		<p>DBS detailed its 'graduate work readiness programme', which is an optional, additional initiative that students can avail of. This is available to all students.</p> <p>Recommendation:</p> <p>The panel recommends that DBS explores the opportunity for their graduate work readiness programme to be an optional, credit-bearing component of programmes offered by the provider.</p> <p>Group assignments were noted as an area that can be a challenge, as some group members do not participate as much as others and differences in academic level of students.</p>
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Criterion 12. The programme is well managed

<p>a) The programme includes intrinsic governance, quality assurance, learner assessment, and access, transfer and progression procedures that functionally interface with the provider’s general or institutional procedures.</p> <p>b) The programme interfaces effectively with the provider’s QQI approved quality assurance procedures. Any proposed incremental changes to the provider’s QA procedures required by the programme or programme-specific QA procedures have been developed having regard to QQI’s statutory QA guidelines. If the QA procedures allow the provider to approve the centres within the provider that may provide the programme, the procedures and criteria for this should be fit-for-purpose of identifying which centres are suited to provide the programme and which are not.</p> <p>c) There are explicit and suitable programme-specific criteria for selecting persons who meet the programme’s staffing requirements and can be added to the programme’s complement of staff.</p> <p>d) There are explicit and suitable programme-specific criteria for selecting physical resources that meet the programmes physical resource requirements, and can be added to the programme’s complement of supported physical resources.</p> <p>e) Quality assurance²² is intrinsic to the programme’s maintenance arrangements and addresses all aspects highlighted by the validation criteria.</p> <p>f) The programme-specific quality assurance arrangements are consistent with QQI’s statutory QA guidelines and use continually monitored completion rates and other sources of information that may provide insight into the quality and standards achieved.</p> <p>g) The programme operation and management arrangements are coherently documented and suitable.</p> <p>h) There are sound procedures for interface with QQI certification.</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Yes	The panel asked DBS to detail its programme management structure and how it relates to this programme. DBS detailed its overarching QA structure and how this allows for strong management of its programmes (this is detailed in the programme document). DBS also explained that each programme has an Academic Director, an Assistant Academic Director, and a dedicated programme coordinator, who can provide assistance with many ‘day-to-day’ queries of students. The panel were satisfied with the programme management arrangements in place and that these allow for quality management of this programme.

²² See also QQI’s Policy on Monitoring (QQI, 2014)

Part 3. Overall recommendation to QQI

3.1 Principal programme:

Select one	
	Satisfactory (meaning that it recommends that QQI can be satisfied in the context of unit 2.3) of Core policies and criteria for the validation by QQI of programmes of education and training;
✓	Satisfactory subject to proposed special conditions (specified with timescale for compliance for each condition; these may include proposed pre-validation conditions i.e. proposed (minor) things to be done to a programme that almost fully meets the validation criteria before QQI makes a determination);
	Not satisfactory.

Reasons for the overall recommendation

DBS presented a thorough rationale for the revalidation of this programme. The documentation is thorough, comprehensive and detailed. During the provider meetings, DBS presented as highly functional, organised and committed to providing a quality programme. Its QA structure was comprehensive and demonstrates an ability to successfully operate this programme. The panel views the condition of validation it has determined as a minor tweak to the programme that will be of benefit to the learners on this programme.

Commendations

1. Demonstrated impact, relevance and applied nature of the programme.
2. Dynamic and passionate team delivering and supporting the programme
3. Strong pedagogical and assessment design underpinning the programme.

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

1. It is a condition of validation that the programme team include a compulsory module that is specifically dedicated to Business Strategy

Summary of recommended special conditions of validation

1. It is a condition of validation that the programme team include a compulsory module that is specifically dedicated to Business Strategy

Summary of recommendations to the provider

1. The panel recommends that DBS explores the opportunity for their graduate work readiness programme to be an optional, credit-bearing component of programmes offered by the provider.

Declarations of Evaluators' Interests

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

Panel chairperson: John Bartlett

Date: 16/05/2024

Signed: 

3.2 Disclaimer

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

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

Part 4. Proposed programme schedules

4.1 1B.5 Proposed Programme Schedule(s)															
Name of Provider:	Dublin Business School FULL-TIME														
Programme Title (Principal)	Higher Diploma in Business					QQI Award Title	Higher Diploma					ECTS	60		
Stage (1,2,3, Award etc)	Award		Exit Award Title (if relevant)			N/A					Stage ECTS	60			
Programme Delivery Mode - ✓one as appropriate.	On-site Face-to-Face				Blended					Online		Workplace Learning			
					✓										
Teaching and Learning Modalities – ✓one or more as appropriate.	On-site Face-to-Face				Synchronous Hybrid			Synchronous Online		Asynchronous			Work Based		
	✓							✓							
Assessment Techniques Utilised in Stage – ✓one or more as appropriate.	Continuous Assessment		Proctored Exam – in person			Proctored Exam – online		Project	Practical Skills Demonstration			Work based			
	✓														
Modules in this stage (add rows as required)															
Total Student Effort Module (hours)										Assessment – Allocation of Marks <i>(from the module assessment strategy)</i>					
Module Title	Semester	Mandatory (M) or Elective (E)	Credits (ECTS)	Total Hours	In person	Synchronous*	Asynchronous	Work Based	Independent Learning	Continuous Assessment %	Proctored Exam – In person %	Proctored Exam – online %	Project %	Practical Skills Demonstration %	Work Based %
Business Operations Management	1	M	5	125	27	9	N/A	N/A	89	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Business ICT	1	M	5	125	27	9	N/A	N/A	89	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Legal Issues for Business	1	M	5	125	27	9	N/A	N/A	89	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Business Sustainability	1	M	5	125	27	9	N/A	N/A	89	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Economics in the Business Environment	1	M	5	125	27	9	N/A	N/A	89	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Management and Organisational Behaviour	1	M	5	125	27	9	N/A	N/A	89	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Human Capital Management	2	M	5	125	27	9	N/A	N/A	89	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Global Marketing	2	M	5	125	27	9	N/A	N/A	89	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Business Finance	2	M	5	125	27	9	N/A	N/A	89	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Innovation, Creativity, and Enterprise	2	M	5	125	27	9	N/A	N/A	89	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Supply Chain Management	2	M	5	125	27	9	N/A	N/A	89	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Business Strategy	2	M	5	125	27	9	N/A	N/A	89	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Special Regulations:	N/A														

*The hours for synchronous delivery should be read as “up to” with the proviso that full contact hours will be delivered. Any hours not covered by synchronous sessions will be covered by in person face-to-face contact hours.

Name of Provider:	Dublin Business School PART-TIME												
Programme Title (Principal)	Higher Diploma in Business					QQI Award Title	Higher Diploma				ECTS	60	
Stage (1,2,3, Award etc)	Award		Exit Award Title (if relevant)			N/A					Stage ECTS	60	
Programme Delivery Mode - ✓one as appropriate.	Face to Face			Blended			Online				Workplace Learning		
				✓									
Teaching and Learning Modalities – ✓one or more as appropriate.	In-person face-to-face			Synchronous Hybrid			Synchronous Online		Asynchronous			Work Based	
	✓						✓						
Assessment Techniques Utilised in Stage – ✓one or more as appropriate.	Continuous Assessment			Proctored Exam – in person		Proctored Exam – online				Project	Practical Skills Demonstration		Work based
	✓												

Modules in this stage (add rows as required)

Total Student Effort Module (hours)										Assessment – Allocation of Marks (from the module assessment strategy)						
Module Title	Semester	Mandatory (M) or Elective (E)	Credits (ECTS)	Total Hours	In person	Synchronous*	Asynchronous	Work Based	Independent Learning	Continuous Assessment %	– in person %	Proctored Exam %	Proctored Exam – online %	Project %	Practical Skills Demonstration %	Work Based %
Business Operations Management	1	M	5	125	3	15	N/A	N/A	107	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Business ICT	1	M	5	125	3	15	N/A	N/A	107	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Legal Issues for Business	1	M	5	125	3	15	N/A	N/A	107	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Business Sustainability	1	M	5	125	3	15	N/A	N/A	107	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Economics in the Business Environment	2	M	5	125	3	15	N/A	N/A	107	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Management and Organisational Behaviour	2	M	5	125	3	15	N/A	N/A	107	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Human Capital Management	2	M	5	125	3	15	N/A	N/A	107	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Global Marketing	2	M	5	125	3	15	N/A	N/A	107	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Business Finance	3	M	5	125	3	15	N/A	N/A	107	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Innovation, Creativity, and Enterprise	3	M	5	125	3	15	N/A	N/A	107	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Supply Chain Management	3	M	5	125	3	15	N/A	N/A	107	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Business Strategy	3	M	5	125	3	15	N/A	N/A	107	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Special Regulations:	N/A															

*The hours for synchronous delivery should be read as “up to” with the proviso that full contact hours will be delivered. Any hours not covered by synchronous sessions will be covered by in person face-to-face contact hours.