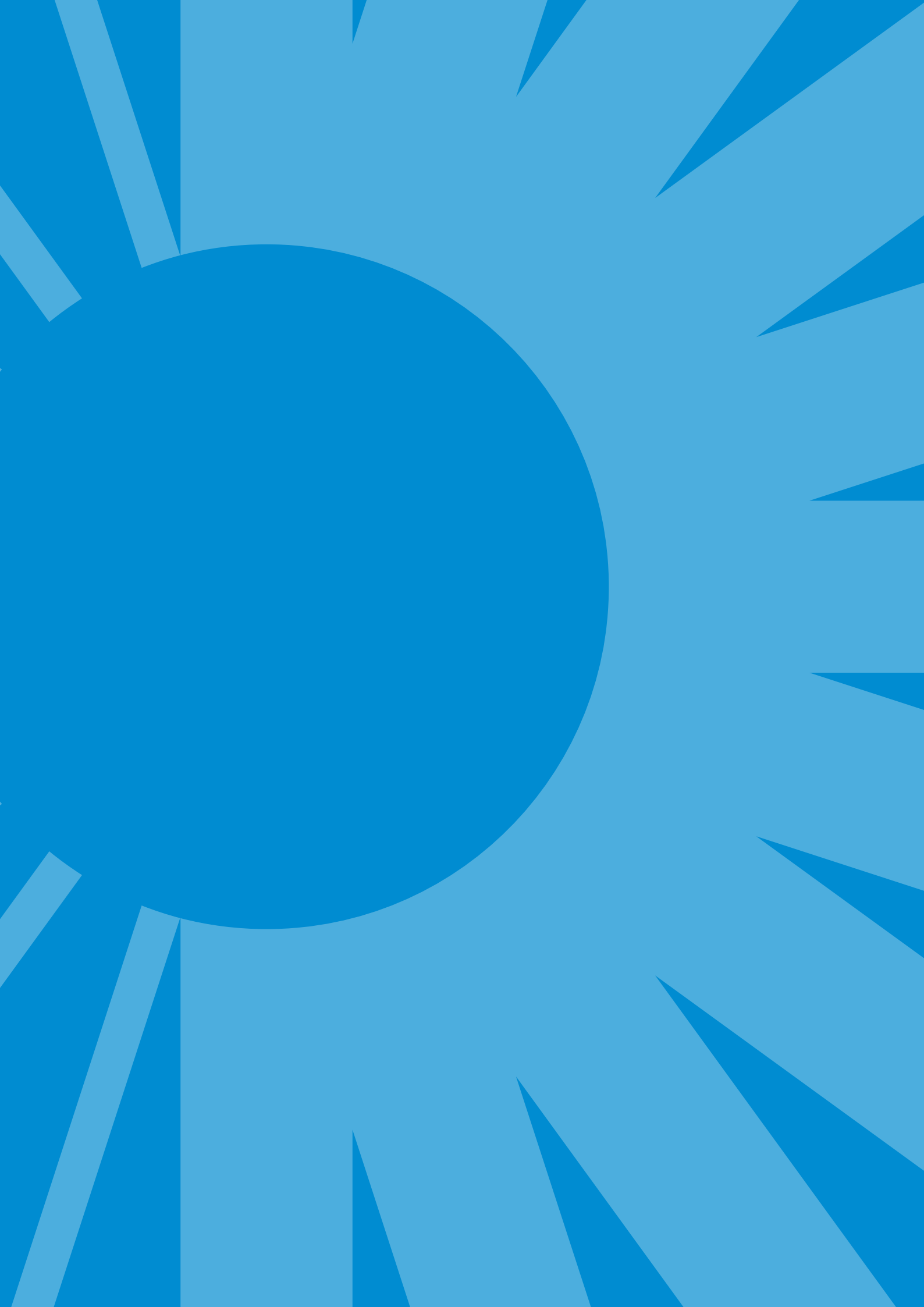




Dublin Business School Institutional Self-Evaluation Report

April 2024





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Abbreviations

AASC	Academic Appointments Sub-Committee
ADWG	Academic Delivery Working Group
AMA	Ask Me Anything
ASC	Academic Support Community
AV	audio-visual
BCP	Business Continuity Plan
CA	continuous assessment
CAO	Central Applications Office
CPD	continuous professional development
CRM	customer relationship management
DA	Delegated Authority
DBS	Dublin Business School
DEI	diversity, equity and inclusion
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EUBS	EU Business School
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GenAI	generative artificial intelligence
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HETAC	Higher Education and Training Awards Council
HR	human resources
HRIS	human resources information system
IABs	Industry Advisory Boards
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IL&R	Information Literacy and Research Department
IT	information technology
KPTM	Kolej Poly-Tech Mara

LU	Learning Unit
MIPLOs	Minimum Intended Programme Learning Outcomes
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
PAEC	(QQI) Programmes and Awards Executive Committee
PASC	Programme Approval Sub-Committee
PAWs	Postgraduate Academic Writing
PLM	Programme Level Manager
PRC	Practice Research Coordinator
PSRB	Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies
QAESC	Quality Assurance, Enhancement and Sustainability Committee
QAH	Quality Assurance Handbook
QERMC	Quality Enhancement and Risk Management Committee
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
RESq	Real-Time EdTech Support, with Quality Guidance
RIPE 23	Research, Innovation, Practice and Enterprise 2023
RPL	recognition of prior learning
SESU	Student Engagement and Success Unit
SIS	student information system
SLATE(2)	Strategy for Learning and Teaching Enhancement (updated)
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Bound
SME	Subject Matter Expert
SOPs	standard operating procedures
STC	Sound Training College
TEL	Technology Enhanced Learning
ToRs	Terms of Reference
UDL	Universal Design for Learning

Introduction

Dublin Business School (DBS) is a Higher Education Institution (HEI) that has been operating since 1975. It is a private HEI with approximately 8,500 students per year. A significant amount of information on DBS has been provided in chapter 2 of the *Institutional Profile* document submitted already as part of this Institutional Review process.

DBS is a wholly owned subsidiary of Kaplan, the education division of the Graham Holdings Company. The College was acquired by Kaplan in 2003 and forms an important part of its global education organisation. DBS has grown substantially since its launch, mostly in the last five years.

Students registered at DBS are taking a programme from across a broad range of disciplines including accounting, business, computer sciences, film and creative media, finance, law, marketing, psychology, counselling and psychotherapy, and social science. Approximately three quarters of the student body is enrolled on QQI-validated programmes, specifically full-time and part-time undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at Levels 6 to 9 of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), including Higher Certificate, Higher Diploma, BA, BA (Hons), BSc (Hons), Postgraduate Diploma, MA, MBA and MSc programmes. The remaining students take programmes that are not on the NFQ, a small number of which are accredited by professional bodies.

The DBS teaching and administration buildings are located in Dublin city centre, with premises on Aungier Street, South Great George's Street, Bow Lane and Digges Lane. The College does not have a dedicated campus, as many other HEIs do; however, the College location in the city centre has proven to be particularly attractive to students.

When DBS was launched in 1975, its initial focus was on preparing students for professional body examinations. More than ten years later College management began to consider entering the more formal and regulated higher education space, and in 1989 DBS introduced its first undergraduate degree programme under a franchise arrangement with Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU). The academic relationship between the two institutions grew over the years, and DBS became an institution with accredited provision status from LJMU in 1995. The collaborative partnership worked very well for 24 years. In 2013, following a strategic review and with mutual agreement with LJMU, DBS decided to seek accreditation of its higher education programmes by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI).

In 1992 DBS became a designated institution with the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC). The early programmes accredited by HETAC led to awards at National Certificate level, while now, as referenced above, DBS offers programmes across Levels 6 to 9 on the NFQ.

The *Institutional Profile* document already submitted sets out much more detail about DBS than this Introduction. This Institutional Self-Evaluation Report provides more granular information on the DBS quality assurance (QA) system in place. It follows the requirements set out in the Terms of Reference (ToRs) for the Institutional Review of private providers and, specifically, endeavours to explore each of the indicative matters identified in the ToRs.

The document has three main chapters. Chapter 1 describes DBS as it relates to the specifications in Objective 1: Governance and Quality Management. Chapter 2 covers Objective 2: Teaching, Learning and Assessment. Chapter 3 covers Objective 3: Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review. Within each chapter we have endeavoured to describe the current situation prevailing at DBS regarding these objectives. We then move on to evaluating our own performance in these areas and drawing some conclusions. Each chapter finishes with areas for improvement that we identified as we undertook the evaluation.



Associated with this document is a folder of additional information that is available to the Institutional Review Panel but is confidential. Where additional information is available, it is referenced at the appropriate point in the document.

The Institutional Review process is a large undertaking for DBS. The time available was limited, with hard stop deadlines for document production. The process involved the whole organisation, with specific people leading on the writing of sections of the documents and others gathering evidence. The process was led by the Registrar (who is also Director of Campus Operations), working closely with the President and the Academic Dean. An Institutional Review Working Group was established, comprising volunteers from across the organisation. We were very pleased with the number and quality of people volunteering, demonstrating the commitment across the organisation to the process and to the quality of DBS. The Working Group included members from faculty, Content Production, Exams Office, Registry, Library, Faculty Management, Student Experience, Student Supports, Academic Management, Admissions, Reception and the Senior Leadership Team. Others across all departments provided information and assistance as requested. Before this document is submitted to QQI, it will be approved for submission by the DBS Academic Board. The Registrar and Academic Dean have been working with the Independent Chair of the Academic Board to ensure she is aware of progress and has had the opportunity to engage in its writing.

The Senior Leadership Team of DBS thanks everyone involved in this process, specifically the Institutional Review Panel members who will read these documents and engage in the Institutional Review process. We also extend specific thanks to everyone at DBS who engaged with the review. We believe the experience has added value to the College.

Chapter 1:

Governance and Quality Management

This chapter of the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER) considers the quality assurance (QA) arrangements in operation at DBS and how they derive from and relate to the College's Vision, Mission and Strategy. It outlines how the corporate and academic governance structures work and how the management and respective boards are reported to and review performance, thereby providing the necessary oversight to the operations of the College. In line with the indicative headings included in the Terms of Reference (ToRs) for this review, this chapter also looks at how the QA system influences the management of talent, programmes, assessment, data, public information, partnerships and research.

DBS Mission and Strategy

Description

DBS developed and published its current [Strategic Plan 2021–2025](#) at the start of the 2021/22 academic year, covering the period up to the end of 2025. Our mission, vision and values are set out in detail in the *Institutional Profile* document and are set out in summary here as a reminder.

DBS Mission

Our mission is to help individuals achieve their education and career goals. We build futures, one success story at a time.

DBS Vision

Diverse, innovative and collaborative. Recognised globally for excellence in teaching and learning and for supporting every learner to build a successful career.

DBS Values

- Act with integrity
- Empower and support
- Create opportunity
- Grow knowledge
- Drive results together.

The College is governed by a Board of six Directors, four of whom are from the shareholder, Kaplan, while two are Non-Executive Directors. The Board has two sub-committees: the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) and the Delegate Authority Committee. This structure provides corporate governance and oversight to the Executive of the College.

The Executive, also called the Senior Leadership Team,¹ is chaired by the President and comprises eight other functional leaders; four are academic and student focused (Registrar and Director of Campus Operations, Academic Dean, Head of Teaching Delivery and Content Production, Head of Student Experience) and four are providers of central services (Chief Financial Officer, Chief Commercial Officer, Head of Information Technology, Head of People and Culture). More detail on this structure is included in chapter 9 of the *Institutional Profile*.

¹ The Senior Leadership Team is the Executive Board of the College, described in more detail later in this chapter.

This governance and management structure sets and approves the direction of the College, establishes the enablers for success and reviews its performance. The mix of skills and interests on the Governance Board, which includes academic, commercial and operational skills and experience (see following section), as well as the interests of the shareholder, ensures strong engagement with all matters presented.

The DBS Strategy influences everything that the College does. The strategic objectives, as set out in the Strategic Plan, are broken down further into a set of related SMART² plans, such as the Academic Plan, Strategy for Learning and Teaching Enhancement (SLATE) and others. Figure 1 graphically sets out the relationship between plans and how they all relate to the Strategic Plan:

- a) The Strategic Plan creates the overall framework.
- b) The SLATE sets out the academic vision for DBS and the academic strategy.
- c) The SMART 3-year Plan sets out the more detailed milestones and actions for the final three years of the Strategic Plan. It also includes key performance indicators (KPIs), milestones, timelines and responsibilities.
- d) The 3-year Business Plan sets out in financial terms the revenue and operations plan over the coming three years.
- e) The annual Academic Plan sets out the academic actions to be taken during the forthcoming academic year and is a significant input to the Annual Quality Report (AQR) submitted to Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI).
- f) The Annual Plan and Budget sets out the revenue and costs for the coming year, the key assumptions behind them and the risks. In addition, a risk review is done annually, and the Business Continuity Plan (BCP) is also updated every year.
- g) Senior Leadership Team (SLT) Annual Goals are set each year by the President, and these determine the high-level goals for each SLT functional area for the coming year.
- h) All of these elements work their way through to local functional or departmental plans and risk reviews.

The performance of the College against various objectives is reported on regularly at Board and Executive level. For example, papers to the Board are written under the headings of the Strategic Plan, and the full cycle of the academic year as set out in the Academic Plan is reviewed by the Academic Board. At a more granular, operational level, a set of KPIs have been created and are reported on at meetings of the SLT and Board. Document ISER 1 in the associated confidential information folder includes a sample KPI report.



² Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Bound

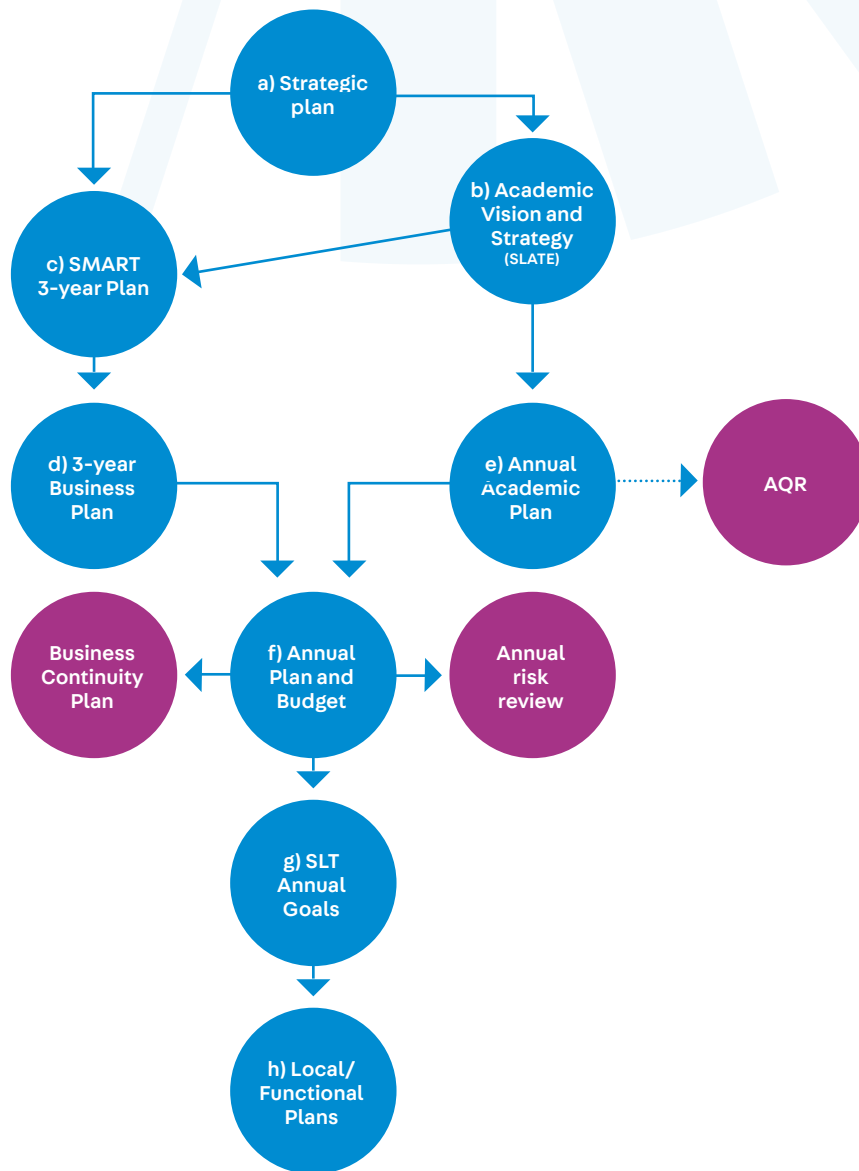


Figure1 Diagram of Plans

Evaluation

The governance structure that has evolved over the past 5 years has helped to create this planning system and culture. As we evaluated its effectiveness as part of this review process, we observed that it works well in the higher-level plans but not as well as it should at a local level. The presence of an effective Governance Board and Academic Board means that high-level plans are developed and reviewed and the performance of the College is reported against the objectives of those plans. At the local level, not every department has its own annual plan of work, which it should have as a basis of determining direction, action and staff performance review. However, each department does its own risk review, an action which has been implemented following a recommendation of the QCI Focused Review completed in 2023.

While the operational KPI report is reviewed by the SLT, presented to the Board and shared with managers, it is not yet used to drive change and improvement. Also, the data required to populate KPI reports has been impacted by the mobilisation of a new student information system (SIS), and management reports from the system need to be expedited.

As part of this process, the President had an informal discussion with some members of staff about the Board. He found that once you go beyond managers directly below the SLT, there appears to be very little awareness of the Board, its functions or its officers. While this does not have a material impact on an individual's work, a greater awareness of the Board and its purpose would enhance the culture of governance and oversight across the College.

In an internal survey of a representative group of the student body carried out in March 2024, 42% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were aware of the DBS Mission and Strategy. Twenty-seven per cent of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were aware of the Mission and Strategy.

Forty-seven per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the learner experience is consistent with the DBS Mission Statement.

These responses show that further engagement with our learners is required to clearly articulate and reinforce the DBS Mission and Strategy at every opportunity.

Document ISER 2 in the associated confidential information folder includes the survey report.

Conclusion

We believe that the QA arrangements we have in place contribute to the fulfilment of the mission and strategy of the College. There is an established vision, mission and strategy for DBS that is well known throughout the College. The Strategic Plan has influenced other important plans and has created a culture of planning and review across management. Plans are reviewed at appropriate intervals, typically halfway through their life, and changes are made as required.

The corporate and academic governance structure, which will be covered in more detail later in this chapter, has set the expectation and the standard for planning and reporting, which is now embedded at management level. While this is positive, there are still gaps that need to be worked on, mainly associated with localising the practice of planning and the mobilisation of action after reviewing performance reports.

In later sections of this document, as well as having done so in the *Institutional Profile* document, we will demonstrate that other goals of our strategy are delivered and further contribute to the purpose and mission of the organisation.

Areas for Improvement

1. Roll out the planning process to local level, ensuring every department has its own annual plan, reviewed by the President.
2. Ensure the availability of timely data to populate KPI reports and review their usage to ensure they are used as appropriate to influence improvement.
3. Communicate more comprehensively on the presence, make-up and purpose of the Governance Board.

Structures and Terms of Reference for the Governance and Management of Quality Assurance

Description

A detailed description of the governance and management structures at DBS are set out in the *Institutional Profile*, in chapter 4, Corporate Governance, and chapter 9, College Management.

The DBS Governance Board comprises six Directors, four appointed by its parent company, Kaplan, and two independent Non-Executive Directors. The Board of Directors acts as the College’s governing body and is unambiguously and collectively accountable for institutional activities, taking all final decisions on matters of fundamental concern within its remit. It meets at least three times per year. Its terms of operation and the responsibility of the Board and the Academic Board are set out in the Articles of Government, provided as additional information with the *Institutional Profile*.

The Academic Board is the supreme academic authority of DBS and the ultimate guardian of the academic integrity of its higher education awards. It has responsibility for overseeing all aspects of academic governance to ensure compliance with external and internal academic regulations, policy and QA standards. Its ToRs are available publicly in the [Quality Assurance Handbook \(QAH\)](#). It meets at least five times per year.

The Executive Board, also known as the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), comprises all senior managers within the College and operates in tandem with the Academic Board to ensure the effective operation and quality delivery of academic programmes, in addition to ensuring the financial sustainability of the College. Its ToRs are also available in the *QAH*. The SLT meets formally every month, with extraordinary meetings outside this schedule as required.

The SLT is chaired by the President of DBS. The President is the Chief Executive Officer and leads the organisation, working with the Governance Board to develop the College’s direction and strategy, guiding staff to deliver teaching and service that provides the best educational experience for students and helps them achieve their targeted outcomes. The President provides important academic, commercial and executive leadership to the College and is a strong advocate for the College’s purpose of inspiring and nurturing every learner to achieve their own career ambitions.

Table 1 shows the dates over the past 3 years when meetings of the Governance Board, Academic Board and SLT took place. All meetings are structured with agendas set and minutes recorded. Documents ISER 3, ISER 4, ISER 5 and ISER 6 in the associated confidential information folder include samples of meeting documents.

Table 1 Meetings of Governance Board, Academic Board and SLT

January 2021	February 2021	March 2021
12/01, SLT	09/02, SLT 23/02, Academic Board	09/03, SLT
April 2021	May 2021	June 2021
13/04, SLT 20/04, Academic Board 22/04, Governance Board	11/05, SLT	08/06, SLT 22/06, Academic Board

July 2021	August 2021	September 2021
13/07, SLT 21/07, Governance Board	10/08, SLT	01/09, Governance Board 14/09, SLT
October 2021	November 2021	December 2021
05/10, Academic Board 13/10, SLT	04/11, Governance Board 10/11, SLT	07/12, Academic Board 14/12, SLT

January 2022	February 2022	March 2022
11/01, SLT	08/02, SLT 15/02, Academic Board	08/03, SLT
April 2022	May 2022	June 2022
05/04, SLT 13/04, Governance Board 19/04, Academic Board	10/05, SLT	14/06, SLT 21/06, Academic Board
July 2022	August 2022	September 2022
12/07, SLT	09/08, SLT 11/08, Governance Board	14/09, SLT
October 2022	November 2022	December 2022
11/10, Academic Board 11/10, SLT	08/11, SLT 24/11, Governance Board	06/12, Academic Board 13/12, SLT

January 2023	February 2023	March 2023
10/01, SLT	14/02, SLT 16/02, Academic Board	04/03, Academic Board 14/03, SLT
April 2023	May 2023	June 2023
13/04, Governance Board 17/04, SLT 20/04, Academic Board	09/05, SLT	27/06, SLT 29/06, Academic Board
July 2023	August 2023	September 2023
11/07, SLT 20/07, Governance Board	15/08, SLT	12/09, SLT
October 2023	November 2023	December 2023
10/10, SLT 12/10, Academic Board 26/10, Governance Board	14/11, SLT	05/12, SLT 07/12, Academic Board

The parent company of DBS, Kaplan, which is the education division of the Graham Holdings Company, also provides governance oversight through requirements for reporting and compliance training. As outlined in the *Institutional Profile*, DBS management is also required to report to Kaplan at regular intervals on its performance under different headings: financial, learning, risk, information technology (IT) and data, and others.

DBS has a structured approach to risk management. There is an annual risk review by the SLT, typically done at its December meeting. At this meeting, the responsible SLT member leads an exercise that undertakes a broad analysis of macro and micro risks for the College. The previous risks are reviewed as an input to the analysis for the forthcoming year, but the prevailing environment and issues are the major factor influencing the determination of risks. Each risk identified is evaluated against a scoring matrix for likelihood, impact and assurance. From this, a residual score remains, ranking each of the risks identified. The 'red risks' (i.e. those with high scores) are recorded and become the subject of a quarterly review at SLT meetings. This risk review structure permeates through the College to other departments and units. Each department has its own risk register, following the same approach and structure as the overall institutional risk register.

In parallel with the approach to risk, DBS has also developed a BCP to cover situations that impact on the continued operation of the College. SLT members are very familiar with the BCP and the processes and protocols to apply in certain circumstances. The latest version of the BCP is available as Document ISER 7 in the associated confidential information folder. In 2019, DBS set about drafting the first BCP, starting with a policy and a more detailed plan. The intention was to ensure an effective strategy and plan was in place to manage business continuity.

The BCP covers all aspects of our business, including IT security, and has an associated risk register focused on scenario planning.

Evaluation

Governance is an element of the College that has improved significantly in recent years. The operational workings of the College underwent a large amount of development work in 2016 and 2017. Then, with improvements in operations implemented, in 2018 attention was turned to corporate and academic governance. The Board took on a more formal structure and way of working, and the first of the Non-Executive Directors was appointed. At the first Board meeting in 2018, the Chair of the Board, who has substantial experience in higher education governance in the UK and had recently finished his term as a member of the Board of the Higher Education Funding Council for England, arranged for all Board members to have training on what it means to be a governor or director of a Higher Education Institute (HEI). The training was sourced from the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education in the UK, as there was no comparable source of developmental information for private HEIs in Ireland. The information briefings and training covered:

- Becoming a governor
- Governance and management
- The workings of a governing body
- Academic governance and quality
- Regulation and compliance
- Commercial operations
- International students and collaborations
- Risk management
- Students
- Strategic plan
- Monitoring performance.

During 2020, the Board determined that its performance and effectiveness should be reviewed independently. BH Associates, an education consulting company operated by Tom Boland, former Chief Executive of the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and Ellen Hazelkorn, Professor Emeritus of Technological University Dublin and a former Board member of the HEA, was engaged to undertake the review. The full report is available in Document ISER 8 in the associated confidential folder, and its main findings and recommendations are as follows.

Findings of the Board Review

- There is agreement that the Board is effective and efficient with meetings pitched at the right level.
- Potential conflicts of interest are assessed regularly.
- There is a robust separation between corporate and academic governance, reflecting good practice.
- The relationship between the Board and the Executive is positive and effective.
- There are close oversight connections between DBS, Kaplan and Graham Holdings.
- The appointment of a Non-Executive Director was a good safeguard against any risk of the interests of the parent company prevailing over those of DBS.

Recommendations from the Board Review

- Consideration should be given to appointing a second Non-Executive Director, which was subsequently done.
- Membership of the Board should be periodically reviewed to ensure it always has a good range of key skills, competences and appropriate engagement with staff and students in its governance.
- The DBS Articles of Government should be reviewed to address factors noted relating to the relationship between DBS and its parent company, the appointment of Directors and other matters.
- A mapping against the QQI criteria for Delegated Authority should be undertaken to prepare DBS for an application for Delegated Authority.

It is now over three years since this review was undertaken, and it will be important to review the effectiveness of the Board again soon, particularly as there have since been changes with the addition of a second Non-Executive Director and the introduction of the ARC.

In terms of academic governance, during 2021 a review of the boards and committee structures of the College was initiated by the Academic Board. A working group was established comprising members of the Academic Board and chaired by the second independent member of the Academic Board. The remit of the group was to review the structure of the existing academic governance and committee bodies to align to a more cohesive and effective structure. It was felt that while there were established boards and committees functioning across the College, DBS had matured and its vision widened since these were set up, and this was an appropriate time to review to ensure the suitability of the structures going forward.

The working group met on six occasions from April to September 2022. It reviewed a proposal by the Independent Chair of the Academic Board for seven sub-committees under the Academic Board. Having reviewed and mapped out ToRs, including the function and remit of each committee, the final outcome was a recommendation for six committees. These were mapped back to the existing committee structures as set out in Figure 2.

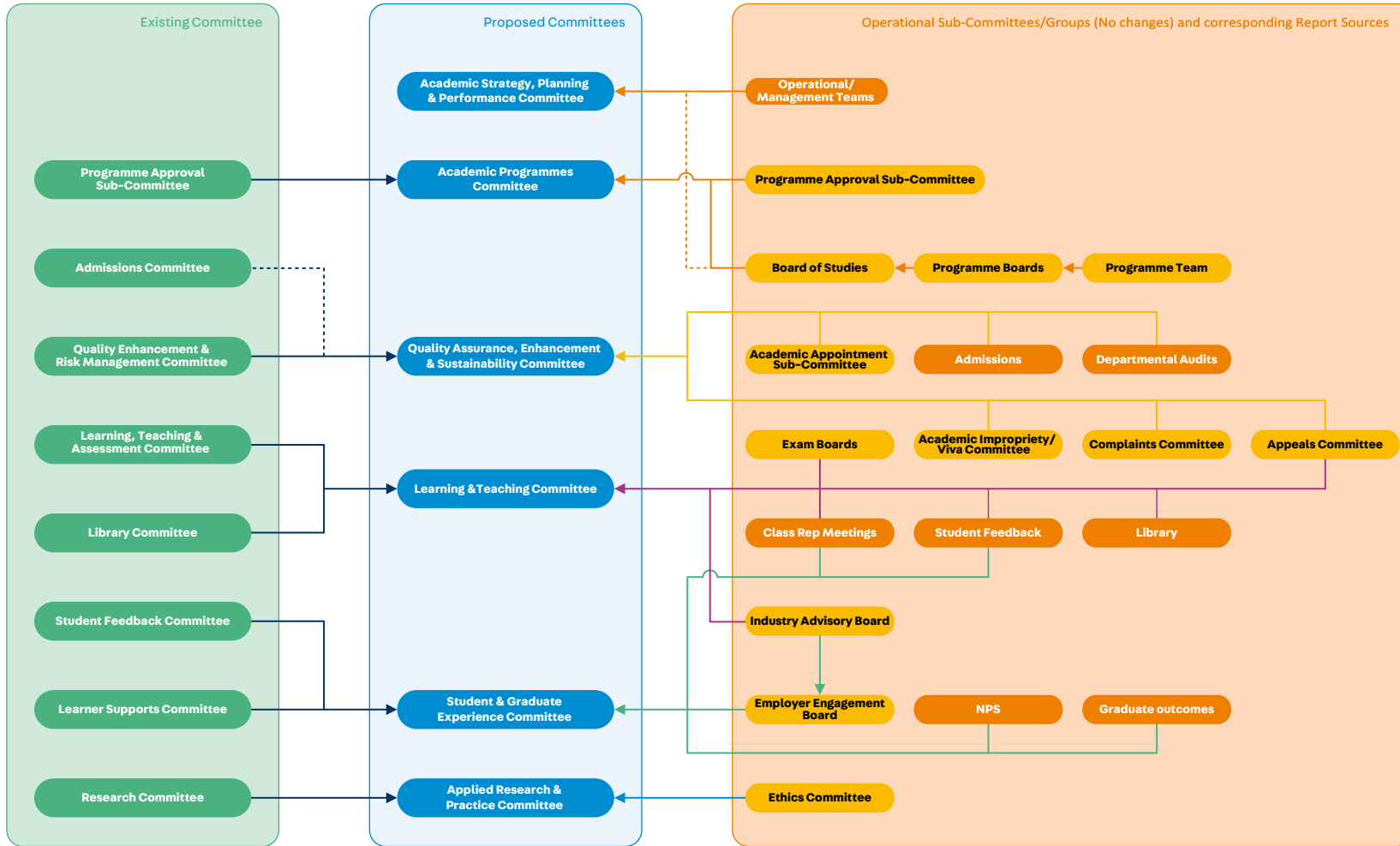


Figure 2 Recommended committee structures

It should be noted that while there was initially an expectation that the overall number of committees and boards in the College would be reduced through this exercise, this was not substantively the case in the final output. While the number of main committees is reduced from eight to six, as shown above, there remains a large body of other boards and committees which report into the main six committees, by virtue of the necessity to cover all required academic and operational functions. However, the exercise did serve to consolidate the work of the committees, bringing together areas that had previously been dealt with separately, as well as formalising some functions and providing weight to the authority of the committees.

Following approval of the proposal in principle by the Academic Board at its December 2022 meeting, it was agreed that implementation of the new committee structures would commence from 2023, subject to a final sign-off by the Academic Board at its February meeting (subsequently moved to March to accommodate an extraordinary meeting of the Board in February). In approving the structures at the March meeting, it was recognised that ToRs of the new committees should be kept under review upon implementation to respond to the operationalisation of the new structure. The committees began to be convened from March 2023.

Other reviews external to DBS were also commissioned or undertaken that provided useful and important feedback to the College on changes it should make to enhance governance.

In response to the matters pertaining to the programmes on Applied Social Care run by DBS until 2022, we commissioned a report by John Vickery, former Registrar of IT Tallaght, on the cause and consequences of the withdrawal by DBS of its application to CORU for its accreditation of our social care programmes. That report identified areas to improve; it also prepared DBS for the Focused Review initiated by QQI into the underpinning QA system in place at DBS for programmes requiring Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) approval. Many of the recommendations made in that report had already been made by the Vickery review, and we had started to implement them. The Vickery Review and the QQI Focused Review Report are available as Documents ISER 9 and ISER 10 in the associated confidential information folder.

Chapter 3 describes our preparation for an application for Delegated Authority (DA). We commenced a self-evaluation process for DA during 2021 by undertaking a high-level gap analysis against the QQI (2016) Procedures and Criteria Relating to Delegation of Authority. As part of this process, we commissioned an independent review by consulting company BDO of all non-academic departments which support the academic purpose of the College. That review identified many areas of improvement in the documentation of processes, resulting in what is now a comprehensive set of standard operating procedures (SOPs) that have improved the functioning of the College. The BDO report and a DA Mock Panel review, also described in more detail in Chapter 3, both identified a potential conflict of interest circumstance in academic governance that could have impacted on the admission of students. This was subsequently mitigated by making changes to the structure of and reporting lines within the Registrar's Office. The BDO report is included as Document ISER 11 in the associated confidential information folder.

As part of the implementation of a new student information system, we commissioned EY, another consulting company, to review how it had been implemented and what areas of exposure and risk remained to be addressed after implementation. The mobilisation of the new system, along with a new customer relationship management (CRM) system in parallel, proved more difficult than had been anticipated, hence the review by EY. This review also made clear recommendations to the College, some of which are implemented already, while others are in process. The EY report is available as Document ISER 12 in the associated confidential information folder.

The BCP was tested with scenarios on a number of occasions. For example,

- In February 2020, we conducted a live experiment with moving some of our teaching online. A small number of modules were targeted, including faculty who would be considered less IT savvy. The intention was to determine our readiness to a move to online learning if the need arose. The outcome allowed us to fine-tune our instructions for online delivery and was instrumental in the following move to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- In August 2022, in conjunction with Kaplan UK, we were part of a simulation exercise conducted by Graham Holdings in which our IT systems were purposely hacked. This tested our preparedness for dealing with this type of scenario, including understanding various policies. The exercise was led by an external consultant, and the teams were given updates on the scenario at regular intervals. Each team then needed to respond to the updates in a live environment. We found this a challenging but useful experience, and we have seen its importance as other organisations in Ireland have since had their systems hacked.
- In September 2023, we carried out a simulation of Moodle being inaccessible to staff and learners. As a critical tool used by all staff and students in DBS, testing our ability to react to the loss of Moodle was essential. Moodle is used for accessing notes, links to online classes and for uploading assessments. Many stakeholders across the organisation will be involved in dealing with an outage in terms of communication, restoration of service, or teaching and assessing learning. Our BCP test interrogated all these areas. The outcome was successful in that a number of plans were well managed and several areas for improvement were identified.

Although our learner numbers have not changed dramatically over the last 10 years, the environment we operate in has. There are more events that can disrupt teaching and that have done so. For example, operating from a city-centre venue with a large international staff and student population means there are particular concerns if anti-social behaviour or events arise, as they did in the closing months of 2023 when there was a riot in Dublin city centre. Other factors such as demographic changes or geopolitical factors that trigger demonstrations can all have an impact on the continuity of College operations.

The expectations of our learners have changed. The tolerance of interruptions to our services is low. As such, the need for a BCP is now more essential.

The BCP was instrumental in our relatively smooth transition to online delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic. A scenario plan was developed to cater for a situation where a weather event (e.g. snow) would close the campus. This involved a move to online delivery, with associated instructions.

Because of the work we had done on business continuity planning, when the country went into lockdown in March 2020, DBS was already well prepared for this scenario.

One area for improvement is that there should be greater awareness of the BCP plan and process among all staff and that it should become a living document. It requires regular updates and should be tested more often. These tests could highlight deficiencies and areas for improvement.

Conclusion

Across DBS, we have worked diligently to establish a culture of quality assurance (QA) and compliance. Managers and staff understand that DBS operates in a regulated environment. We also understand that there is an ongoing desire for continuous improvement, that QA is a 'hygiene factor' and that quality enhancement is the constant focus.

As an academic institution, we understand the importance of reporting on performance and activity, acknowledging errors and deficiencies where they apply. One of the most visible examples of this is when an individual staff member undertakes an action in error that they suspect may be a breach of data requirements. Staff self-report through a ticketing system that triggers an email to the President, other senior leaders and managers, and the Kaplan legal office in the UK. There follows an investigation and a determination of whether a data breach has occurred. Following that, corrective action is taken, including any refresher training or information for the staff member. There is no retribution in such circumstances, and staff are widely encouraged to self-report.

The culture that emanates from the Governance Board and the Academic Board to the Executive ensures that an expectation of good governance and compliance prevails. In turn, we believe a similar culture emanates from the Executive Board, or SLT, to the rest of the operations of the College.

Areas for Improvement

1. Publish the minutes of Academic Board meetings to enhance the awareness of the Academic Board and its work.
2. Commence another review of the Governance Board.
3. Increase the awareness among staff of the Business Continuity Plan and what is required of staff in certain continuity circumstances.

The Documentation of Quality Assurance Policy and Procedures

A well-established set of policies governs almost all parts of the College, summarised under the headings of academic policies and operating policies. Each policy has, in the main, applicable SOPs.

Academic Policies and Procedures

The academic policies and procedures are recorded in the *Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH)*. The *QAH* is a publicly accessible set of links containing all academic policies and procedures. It has three main sections:

- Part A – Governance and Policies: Gives details of governance structures, roles, and relevant Terms of Reference
- Part B – The Learner Journey: Covers admission, learner supports, learner conduct and appeals, programme participation, assessment and awards
- Part C – Programme Quality: Outlines teaching and learning, programme development and review and collaborations, both national and transnational.

The review and evaluation process of the *QAH* is set out in more detail in Chapter 3 of this document.

Evaluation

As a document that is critical to a learner's understanding of our procedures, the *QAH* must be circulated to all stakeholders at frequent intervals. This is done initially at induction, but subsequently referred to throughout the Learner Journey, particularly during the periods leading up to assessment, and if there is a need for a post-assessment appeal.

All references to the *QAH* are sent via email with links to the relevant section to assist in navigating what is a large document. Significant effort has been made to divide the *QAH* into manageable sections that are easy to understand, depending on the context of the need to refer to the document.

Crucially, the policies have a set period for revision, which fosters a continuous improvement ethos and keeps the policies live and fit for purpose.

Operating Policies and Procedures

The operational policies and procedures cover all non-academic activity in the College, including central services such as Finance, Human Resources (HR), Marketing and IT, as well as the operations of all other departments.

As was referenced earlier in this chapter, DBS commissioned a report from consulting company BDO as part of our preparation for Delegated Authority. Arising from that report it was noted that there was a deficit in documentation to support the existence of SOPs.

DBS commenced a project to create and centralise all SOPs in 2022. This project had four main phases, to be concluded in September 2022:

1. Creating an approved, standardised template document for all SOPs, with effective document controls embedded
2. Providing guidance and training to all staff on how to write, review and maintain SOPs
3. Documenting all required SOPs through engagement with senior managers and other key stakeholders
4. Creating a centralised repository for published SOPs, accessible to all staff.

Evaluation

The SOP project encountered several challenges from the start, including limited availability of key staff and an unexpected growth in the project's scope. This led to extending the project time frame to March 2023. Despite creating a standardised SOP template and providing additional training, close oversight by the Project Manager was necessary to ensure consistency in drafting the procedures.

During the third phase, approximately 100 SOPs were identified, though the number grew to 315 due to revisions and new discoveries, such as where an expected SOP required splitting into two or more constituent SOPs. The benefits of standardised SOPs include improved problem solving, process efficiency, training, visibility and accountability.

Operational benefits include enhanced student record management and query resolution, as well as an additional resource base for the training of new staff, all leading to a better learner experience. The project also fostered increased cross-functional engagement and recognition of its importance among stakeholders.

While the internal SOPs and policy documents are aimed at an audience of administrative staff and faculty, the policies set out in the *QAH* are primarily intended to be accessed by learners. As such, the language of the policies set out in the *QAH* must take account of this audience. While the drafting of policies within the *QAH* has been actively conscious of learners as a target audience, the distillation of policy and regulatory language into easily readable descriptions remains challenging.

Conclusion

The College has a comprehensive set of academic policies and processes, set out in the *Quality Assurance Handbook*, that are relevant and reviewed at reasonable intervals. An improvement has been made to their accessibility, though there is still opportunity to make them more accessible. Consideration is being given to using artificial intelligence to provide a more accessible user interface for students.

The College now also has a comprehensive set of operational non-academic policies and standard operating procedures (SOPs), with a significant improvement in these during the past 3 years. As well as the benefit derived from the presence of an individual SOP, the review that identified the deficit in SOPs has also helped to create a culture of structured operational practices, from the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) through to all operational departments. All new policies and SOPs are submitted to the SLT for approval before they are published and used. Every individual SOP is sponsored by an SLT member.

Areas for Improvement

1. Offer training to in-house policy writers to ensure learner-facing policies are accessible and the language does not hinder engagement for those for whom English is not their first language.
2. Formally identify impacted stakeholders when amending existing policies or standard operating procedures (SOPs), or when introducing new policies or SOPs, with a communication plan set out and implemented.
3. Explore the opportunities of artificial intelligence-driven systems to facilitate the accessibility of policies.
4. Formalise an annual or cyclical review phase for all SOPs belonging to a department in the department's annual workplan, and ensure sufficient time is set aside to conduct this review and implement changes as required.
5. Formalise the inclusion of SOPs during the onboarding of new staff.

Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

Description – Recruitment

Recruitment at DBS is managed by the HR team, who monitor and have oversight of the process to ensure that all QA procedures in relation to DBS policies, current employment legislation, and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) commitments are met and that candidates have the appropriate qualifications, experience and immigration status to be employed by DBS. Please see the *DBS Recruitment Policy* in Appendix 1 for more details.

Interviews are conducted based on competency-based questions to ensure fairness and consistency, in alignment with our commitment to equal opportunity as per the DBS DEI policy (see Appendix 2). Supporting evidence is required to be submitted by the prospective candidate in relation to qualifications and immigration eligibility; this evidence is kept on Workday, the DBS human resources information system (HRIS). Reference checks are also undertaken.

There are various qualifications and experience requirements for different roles across the College. For non-faculty positions, we focus our recruitment on applicants who have qualifications or experience that mirror our higher education aspirations. For faculty positions, we recruit specific skills depending on the role and discipline. Lecturers are normally required to be qualified to a minimum of one National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) level above the level at which they will be teaching. For example, a lecturer hired to teach a Level 8 programme will have a minimum of a Level 9 qualification. There are exceptions for those programmes that are geared towards industry or professional engagement, where individuals with lower-level qualifications may be considered. For example, in counselling and psychotherapy programmes, practice expertise and experience are fundamental prerequisites.

In certain fields, we strive to fulfil the criteria set by professional bodies. For instance, the Psychological Society of Ireland typically requires that at least 80% of staff who are part of the delivery of psychology programmes are qualified in psychology to doctorate level. To ensure the proficiency of our faculty, all candidates for academic positions are presented to the Academic Appointments Sub-Committee (AASC) for endorsement prior to an offer and contract being issued. This sub-committee of the Academic Board reviews CVs and interview notes of successful candidates and determines if they should be accepted without conditions, accepted with certain conditions or not accepted, based on the candidates' qualifications and professional and academic experience.

The HR team continues to keep abreast of any changes in employment legislation to ensure that all DBS recruitment policies and procedures meet government legislation and directives, in particular as they pertain to contractual terms and conditions, General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) guidelines and equal employment opportunities legislation.

Description – Staff Development

Upon joining DBS, staff undergo a thorough induction process covering essential information about the College, policies, health and safety regulations, and work practices. They also gain insights into our products, services, goals and structure, along with an understanding of our performance management, support and development expectations, and our core values.

In addition, as part of the QA process, once a year the Graham Holdings Company requires designated managers and employees across its divisions to complete a certification of compliance with certain governance policies and practices covered by the Company's *Code of Business Conduct*. Other training that must be completed as part of our *DBS Training and Development Policy* is in the areas of information security and privacy, GDPR and anti-corruption and antitrust compliance.

DBS evaluates staff development initiatives and solicits feedback through training needs analysis surveys and performance management processes, with a focus on continuous improvement. Furthermore, line managers and staff are empowered to collaborate on the identification of training needs. Across the College, training methods include on-the-job learning, team-based cross-training, eLearning platforms, coaching and mentoring, and classroom-based instruction.

We actively encourage employees to apply for internal educational courses at no cost as per our DBS [Staff Attending Internal DBS Courses Policy](#). We also provide financial assistance for external courses. This comprehensive approach supports our commitment to empowering employees and fostering their professional development.

Faculty are required to engage in training and professional development to fulfil their administrative and learning, teaching and assessment commitments. Mandatory administrative and technical training and teaching guidance are made available to faculty to complete as part of their induction programme. Mandatory training and continuous professional development (CPD) may also be required of faculty post probation due to changing circumstances or student feedback. A formalised mechanism to support and reward training and CPD did not exist prior to January 2024 when a new *Faculty and CPD Policy* (see Appendix 3) was approved by the SLT and will be communicated during the second semester of 2023/24.

In addition, we offer ongoing professional development opportunities for faculty to enhance their teaching skills and research capabilities. These include workshops on academic integrity, Moodle marking, training procedures, moderation, proctored exams, Moodle quizzes and Exam Board regulations run by the DBS Learning Unit (LU) and Registrar's Office.

Another initiative aimed at supporting faculty, but specifically through research, is the Research Grant Scheme, which offers faculty the opportunity to apply for a grant to pursue research that is in line with the DBS strategic objectives. Ten grants are available each year, each valued at 37.5 teaching hours for the successful recipient. All faculty are invited to apply. Applications are reviewed and assessed by three external reviewers and scored against a set of criteria.

Description – Staff Management

Within DBS, the SLT leads and supports its management cohort of about 40 managers through meetings, guidance and communication focused on the achievement of key milestones tied to the DBS Strategy.

This equips the managers to lead their teams and prioritise workloads. While this cohort has received access to various College-wide training and development initiatives, we do recognise that further investment is required towards enhancing their technical capabilities and management skills. This will be achieved through management programmes and individual bespoke development plans monitored through the DBS performance management feedback process.

The management of staff across the College has been guided by the DBS Mission, Vision, Values and behaviours, supported by a robust governance and communications framework. This framework comprises various committees, meetings and email and video messages, each serving a specific purpose. It is a mix of formal structures and a collegiate culture where teams meet on a regular basis to achieve goals and deliver projects. It is also a means by which staff are kept informed about developments affecting the College, enabling them to contribute to decision-making processes.

Staff input in DBS is gained through several formal governance structures. These include the Academic Board, the monthly SLT executive and operations meetings, the monthly Academic Operations meeting and the quarterly management meetings. We also receive feedback through the annual Kaplan Engagement Survey, as well as once-off surveys targeted at particular topics and themes. In relation to the Kaplan Survey, we share the results College-wide each year, as well as with each team, and the relevant SLT member agrees with their team action plans going forward.

Over recent years there has been a significant focus on faculty management. We took a proactive step in 2021 by establishing the Academic Delivery Working Group (ADWG) in response to the staff feedback (gathered through focus groups) around prevalent issues surrounding inconsistencies across legacy lecturing contracts, discrepancies in lecturer workloads, and the inadequacy of resources required to effectively run our academic programmes. A number of changes and initiatives were introduced to support faculty:

- Review of the then Course Director post and creation of the new post of Academic Director post to support programme innovation, employer engagement and foster business opportunities within each discipline area
- Review of lecturer contract terms and conditions
- Review of the job description of a lecturer
- Introduction of a new performance appraisal system for every post reviewed and introduced
- Introduction of a performance tracker system for monitoring faculty performance
- Introduction of the post of Programme Level Manager
- Review of the job description of the existing Senior Lecturer post and introduction of a new post
- Introduction of a weekly teaching cap
- Introduction of an annual teaching cap
- Introduction of an annual workload cap
- Support for faculty with marking assessments for modules that have large class sizes
- Increase in the number of full-time salaried faculty to improve engagement across Programme Teams.

Feedback was sought from faculty through focus groups in relation to some of the changes implemented.

DBS manages the competence and professional standards of its staff through its performance management process. This is a continuous process of communication between managers and staff throughout the year aimed at achieving the College's strategic objectives and ensuring compliance with its standards, *Performance Management Policy* and regulations, as well as the management and development of its staff. It also provides a forum where staff can give feedback to their line manager. The annual performance reviews take place from October to December. Goal setting occurs in the first quarter of the calendar year, aligning objectives with the DBS Business Strategy.

Informal coaching conversations are also conducted to address performance gaps and ensure the competence of its staff, with managers identifying areas for improvement and setting clear steps for progress. Formal performance improvement meetings follow if issues persist, where performance improvement targets and timelines may be established through a Performance Improvement Plan.

Managers play a crucial role in understanding and applying performance policies, while staff are expected to adhere to DBS standards and regulations and to perform competently in their role.

Managing and measuring the performance of faculty members requires a multifaceted approach. Each semester we seek feedback from students through surveys. This feedback is shared with lecturers in order to foster a culture of continuous improvement. Should areas of concern be identified, the Faculty Manager collaborates with the relevant Academic Director and, where necessary, the LU, to devise bespoke training programmes tailored to address specific needs.

Feedback with faculty is an ongoing process, not just confined to formal channels. Emails from students commending lecturers or raising concerns or issues, along with inputs from the class representative system, serve as additional sources of valuable feedback. This approach ensures that faculty members are apprised of both commendations and areas for improvement. Faculty Management tracks the performance of faculty members based on this and other parameters. These include meeting deadlines such as exam paper submissions, timely upload of assessment marks and active participation in Programme Team meetings and marketing events. To track the performance of faculty members, we created a dedicated performance tracker system. This system serves as a repository for logging performance-related issues and exemplary practices as they arise.

Evaluation – Recruitment

The DBS recruitment process runs smoothly, supported by our Workday HRIS, and we continue to streamline it. Job profiles have been updated to reflect changes in our organisational structure, and we are now reviewing interview guides to reflect these updated changes with updated competency-based interview questions.

Over the course of 2023, DBS welcomed 133 new team members comprising both faculty (71) and non-faculty positions (62). While some roles were easy to fill, others that required specialist knowledge were more challenging, particularly in a buoyant market where talent with certain skill sets was scarce. Cost-of-living pressures have also been a factor pushing salary packages upwards and affecting the attraction of talent. In addition, we are challenged with narrowing the gender pay gap, which has widened over the last 12 months. As a result, the focus from here on is on a targeted recruitment approach.

As the College continues to expand and accommodate increasing numbers of students, we recognise the imperative to reassess our approach to faculty recruitment. We need to actively explore alternative strategies to attract talented faculty members. A suggestion is to tap into our Industry Advisory Boards (IABs). The IABs have an important role to play in DBS achieving its vision. There is no reason why we cannot partner with them to bring expertise on specific knowledge to deliver on our programmes. One approach we currently use to address this is leveraging the valuable network of our faculty members to identify potential candidates. We are in the process of formalising a referral programme to acknowledge and incentivise staff members who refer qualified individuals for faculty positions.

In the academic year 2022/23 Faculty Management submitted 164 nominations to the AASC for faculty positions (lecturing and/or supervision), including faculty from our transnational partnerships. While all nominations were ultimately approved, additional clarification was required for 43 of them, prompting further communication with the candidates to gather the necessary information. This shows the significance of the AASC process and demonstrates its effectiveness in maintaining quality standards and facilitating informed decision making, giving assurance to the Academic Board and the College.

Evaluation – Staff Development

In relation to staff development, there has been ongoing progress year-on-year towards building staff capability, and this is evident in our Kaplan Engagement Survey results for the last three years. Staff have expressed a positive response to the questions regarding growth and development, as Table 2 shows.

Table 2 Growth and development questions from the annual Employee Engagement Survey

Growth and Development Kaplan Employee Engagement Survey Questions	2021 %	2022 %	2023 %
I have opportunities to advance and develop my career.	48.3	58.1 (+9.8)	65.4 (+7.3)
My manager supports my skills and career development.	69.4	75.0 (+5.6)	75.1 (+0.1)

The training needs analysis highlighted a mix of technical and soft skills that staff need to have or should have, which varied across teams. College-wide staff development needs were addressed to some extent in 2023 and will continue to be a focus for 2024. The next step will be to progress this further at both the team and individual levels.

At a team level, we need to progress and prioritise staff development that supports both the needs of their function and high-priority projects linked to the DBS Strategy. A particular focus is to ensure staff are equipped with the right skills for major transformation initiatives, for example, the new student information system TSM, and we are working towards a structured approach for new hires and existing staff as required. In addition, we see a need for staff who have been promoted to managerial roles to be equipped to manage their teams effectively, and we are in the process of looking at external providers, for example, LinkedIn and the Kaplan Group, to provide this training.

One of the challenges we have faced is participation rates for scheduled courses due to timing and workload issues, and we will continue to engage with the SLT to facilitate courses that can be conducted at times when workloads are less challenging.

In January 2021, due to the rise in faculty numbers, it became imperative to reassess our induction programme for new faculty. A new programme was developed and titled the New Faculty Pathway (see Appendix 4). Prior to the introduction of this new pathway, the induction and orientation of new lecturers was not sufficiently comprehensive. The purpose of the New Faculty Pathway is to provide new starters with all the information that is needed to function comfortably and effectively in their role. A Module Pathway must also be completed by new faculty within their 6-month probationary period. On completion of the Module Pathway, a digital badge is issued to lecturers. (More detail on the Module Pathway is available in Document ISER 13 in the associated confidential folder.)

Evaluation – Staff Management

Through the governance and communications framework, staff have been managed and kept informed of developments as they arise. There has been considerable progress in staff communications through the issue of the monthly newsletters covering news, upcoming events, staff achievements and DEI themes. While there has been considerable improvement, we do recognise that we need to facilitate opportunities to improve two-way communication channels to allow staff to give timely and regular feedback. This is a theme that became prevalent over the last four years in the Kaplan Engagement Survey, where communications across departments required improvement. We are, however, pleased to note that given our efforts to date, over the last 12 months, the Kaplan Engagement Survey has shown an increase in the number of positive responses to communications-related questions by 6.7%.

There is also an opportunity to further develop a structure that more frequently supports cross-collaboration initiatives to enhance staff engagement. While engagement has incrementally improved by 25.2% between 2019 and 2023, we are still challenged with the engagement of part-time staff. We would like to work towards projects and events that bring staff together as a community regardless of whether they are part-time, hourly paid or full-time salaried staff.

We also acknowledge that DBS as a College is evolving and that we need to revisit our culture in terms of what we need to enhance, what we need to maintain and what we need to eliminate. While we have done considerable work on the future DBS academic working model, we need to look at the College as a whole and where we want to position ourselves over the next 4-5 years. While we have articulated the behaviours we value, we feel that there is still some work required regarding embedding this for staff across DBS. We are working towards the development of a new culture programme for DBS to support its strategic direction over the next 4-5 years.

In relation to the ADWG key achievements, we are pleased with the progress to date, and this has also been reflected in the engagement scores of academic staff showing an increase of 11.8%, which we believe is due to consultation with faculty on key changes as we progressed.

Looking back, a key learning from the ADWG was that creating a model that had a 'one size fits all' approach does not necessarily work given the variety and complexity of programmes across the College. With this in mind, within the counselling and psychotherapy discipline, we are currently working on a possible restructuring that will revise roles to align with the specific needs of the learners and department.

By focusing on streamlining lecturing contracts, balancing lecturer workloads and enhancing resource allocation, the ADWG aims to foster an environment conducive to academic excellence and student success. The Working Group continues to meet twice a month, and as issues arise - whether immediate or long-term - they are brought to this group for in-depth discussion and review. The Working Group members include the Head of People and Culture (Chair), the Head of Teaching Delivery and Content Production, and the Academic Dean supported by a HR Business Partner.

While we have implemented measures to monitor faculty performance including tangible aspects like meeting deadlines or engagement in College activities, there is a need to enhance our focus on classroom dynamics and the quality of our teaching. While our recent introduction of peer observation primarily serves as mentorship and support for new faculty, there may be merit in extending this practice across Programme Teams to benefit longer-tenured staff members as well. We also complete Moodle audits to verify that the content within Moodle pages aligns with the objectives outlined in the module descriptor and to ensure that the page can be easily navigated by students.

Managing a faculty cohort exceeding 309 members under the oversight of three Faculty Managers can be difficult. We are also actively exploring additional resources to alleviate this strain. Doing so will enable Faculty Managers to concentrate their efforts on effectively supporting, developing and managing our faculty.

Conclusion

The management of recruitment, staff development and staff management at DBS reflects our commitment to fostering an environment of excellence, inclusion and continuous improvement. Our recruitment process is robust and ensures compliance with our quality assurance procedures, our DBS policies, our diversity, equity and inclusion commitments and current employment legislation. In the future, our attention will be on targeted recruitment to narrow our gender pay gap and leveraging our networks to attract talent.

DBS focuses on ensuring professional standards are maintained and enhanced across the College, thereby assuring ourselves of the competencies of our staff. This is evident through our comprehensive induction programmes, our training initiatives and our support for professional growth. We will look towards embedding this further by addressing staff needs through individual personal development plans.

We will continue to manage our staff by fostering a culture of open communication and collaboration, which is reflected in our governance structures, feedback mechanisms and initiatives such as the introduction of the Academic Delivery Working Group. DBS will continue to look for opportunities to facilitate cross-collaboration projects where staff can play an active role and input into decision making.

Areas for Improvement
1. Focus on targeted recruitment to reduce our gender pay gap.
2. Ensure we are addressing staff needs through individual personal development plans.
3. Facilitate cross-collaboration projects where staff can play an active role and input into decision making.
4. Actively recruit additional Faculty Managers to support faculty.
5. Further invest in our DBS management team through management development programmes and bespoke individual development plans.

Programme Development, Approval and Submission for Validation

Description

DBS has submitted a large volume of programmes to QQI for validation or revalidation in recent years. New programmes, as they are being planned, are developed on the basis that DBS always wishes to have a strong, relevant portfolio of programmes available to meet the evolving needs of students in the markets it serves. The fourth strategic objective of the College is to Be Independently Sustainable, and within that objective one of the goals is to continue to develop market-led programmes to a known need. As such, we endeavour to continuously create new programmes where we see a need present or emerging, all within the scope of provision the College is already approved for.

The Registrar's Office usually informs QQI of any new programmes in development around the start of the academic year, although new programmes may be initiated at any time of the year. New programmes in development and the programmes under review are formally reported on at the Academic Board and Senior Leadership Team meetings by the Academic Dean. The Registrar's Office maintains oversight of programmes coming up for review in conjunction with the Academic Dean to ensure timely commencement of the review process. Templates, style guides and process documents are held centrally on the Academic Programmes drive. This is managed by the Academic Programmes Manager, who reports to the Academic Dean and supports Academic Directors and Programme Teams in their work on programme (re)validations.

There are seven main stages for programme development set out in the *QAH* as follows:

1. Initiation
2. Programme proposal development
3. Internal review
4. DBS external evaluation (mock panel)
5. Submission to QQI
6. Approval of programme (panel and follow-up)
7. Implementation

New Programme Development and Approval

The potential for a new programme offering may originate from anywhere within the College. Typically, this may come from the student recruitment team identifying developments in the market or from Academic Directors, who will be aware of emerging skills areas and needs as well as developments in their discipline areas. In 2022, formal meetings with the Academic Dean, Academic Directors and Chief Commercial Officer were set up to discuss early-stage programme proposals to bring to the next stages of development.

The programme development processes require that new programmes go through a series of stages and checkpoints to ensure that as a programme is developed, any issues can be identified and addressed.

The concept for a new programme must be approved before proceeding into full development. A Programme Proposal Form is completed, setting out core information such as:

- Proposed title
- Embedded awards
- Credits
- Validating and recognition bodies (QQI and PSRB, as applicable)
- Mode(s) of delivery
- Timeline

- Rationale (academic and professional)
- Structure
- Minimum Intended Programme Learning Outcomes (MIPLOs)
- Audience
- Similar programmes and market research
- Feasibility study - including demand, capacity and financials.

As per the process set out in the *QAH*, the Programme Approval Sub-Committee (PASC) is convened to review this, provide feedback and form an opinion on whether a programme can proceed. Following approval, the wider development of the programme continues with the involvement of the Programme Team. Consultation with stakeholders such as industry, students, graduates and faculty is key in this process to ensure the programme concepts and rationale are fully justified and supported. Any professional body considerations must also be addressed. Where Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) accreditation or recognition is to be sought, there is an additional quality assurance (QA) requirement as detailed below. Modes of delivery are also considered in the programme design to ensure an appropriate blend of face-to-face, online synchronous and online asynchronous delivery, as appropriate for the particular programme.

All new programmes are required to undergo external review through a 'mock panel' process before they can be formally approved to be submitted for validation. The 'mock panel' emulates the actual validation process and comprises a chair with a QA background, an academic and an industry expert. Additional members may be included as required, depending on the programme. An on-site or online panel meeting is held, usually over a half day. Rather than the wider validation criteria relating to institutional matters being the focus of these events, it is usually the programme construct, rationale and curriculum. The mock panel is asked to make recommendations, which may include a view that a programme is not yet ready to proceed to validation. Following this process, the Programme Team is required to address any issues and recommendations. Once these are satisfactorily addressed, all programme documentation, including Terms of Reference setting out the proposed membership of the panel profile are submitted to QCI by the Registrar's Office for screening. As DBS has Devolved Responsibility for arranging the panel evaluation of a new programme, once approval from QCI has been obtained, the Registrar's Office sets up the external panel and organises the review meeting, including agreeing the agenda and attendees with the chair of the panel.

Programme Review and Revalidation

Programmes are reviewed on a regular cycle dictated by the final intake date set out in the Certificate of Validation. The Programme Review process leading to an application for revalidation is similar to that of developing a new programme with regard to the main steps.

Where a programme is proceeding for Review and Revalidation, Terms of Reference are submitted to QCI for approval. Programmes under review do not require formal internal approval through the PASC, as the construct, rationale and evidence for the basis of the programme is already established.

Input from all stakeholders is required in the review process. The final programme is approved through the Registrar's Office to proceed to a panel. The panel and review meetings are set up as with a new programme. QCI is required to approve the make-up of the panel in advance. Following completion of the panel, report and response, an application is made to QCI for revalidation of the programme.

More detail on the Programme Review process is set out later in this document under Objective 3, in the context of processes relating to self-evaluation and monitoring.

Work-Integrated Learning

Ensuring that work-integrated learning is fully embedded within programmes is based on collaboration between the Programme Teams led by the Academic Directors, the IABs and the DBS Careers Team. As part of the programme design process, key skills and attributes are identified and mapped out as a soft skills matrix which is linked back to the curriculum and MIPOs. The table in Appendix 6 shows an example of the soft skills.

The work-integrated elements can be in the shape of skills development in taught modules, or through the immersive experience of a work placement, such as included in the MSc in Digital Marketing and Analytics and the MSc in Supply Chain Management. Our programmes are evolving to include greater work-based learning that better prepares graduates for employment, in line with our strategic objective of Creating Work-Ready Graduates. As programmes are reviewed for revalidation and new programmes planned, serious consideration is given to the inclusion of work-based learning.

Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB)

For any programme for which it is intended or required to seek PSRB recognition or approval, any relevant existing requirements, byelaws or criteria are interrogated and aligned with during the development of the programme. This may relate to inclusion of specific areas within the curriculum, staff qualifications, mode of delivery, placement or experiential hours, or other requirements. Also, where possible, the PSRB approval process will be followed in parallel with the QQI (re)validation process. For example, representation from the PSRB or someone affiliated with the PSRB may be sought to sit on the validation panel, as appropriate.

The requirements and processes of different PSRB vary quite widely. In the case of bodies associated with programmes in Human and Social Science, for example, it is often the case that accreditation or recognition can only be applied for once the validated programme has commenced (i.e., a post-ante process).

Regardless of the timings and processes above, for any programmes which are seeking PSRB recognition or approval or have recognition requiring renewal, review by an external expert is required, whether in parallel with the QQI validation process or carried out separately. A reviewer is appointed who is qualified such that they are eligible for recognition by the PSRB. That reviewer completes a formal written report outlining how the programme meets the requirements and criteria of the PSRB. This process is managed through the Registrar's Office and the output report is submitted to the Academic Board.

Final approval by the Registrar is required before submission of any application to the relevant professional body.

DBS has improved this process following matters pertaining to the Applied Social Care programmes, where the College withdrew its submission for approval on foot of feedback from CORU, the health and social care regulator. This is covered in more detail later in this chapter, in the section on Other Parties Involved in Education and Training.

Transnational and Collaborative Delivery

As will be discussed in the Other Parties Involved in Education and Training section, DBS currently has three transnational partners offering QQI-validated DBS programmes in their local jurisdiction: Kolej Poly-Tech Mara (KPTM) in Malaysia, EU Business School in Germany, and the University of New York Prague in the Czech Republic. We also have a local collaboration in Dublin with Sound Training College for the delivery of specialist undergraduate programmes.

The relationship with KPTM is the most established, with a partnership having been in existence since 1994. As such, this has set the model for the development of the subsequent transnational and collaborative partnerships, specifically with regard to Programme Validation. In all cases to date, programmes for transnational delivery were existing programmes, while the Sound Training College collaboration was for the development of new programmes.

In seeking a transnational or domestic collaboration validation, an extensive process is carried out as part of the development and validation process, whereby:

- A due diligence checklist as per the template in the QAH is generated and provided to the partner institution.
- The project teams from both institutions meet to work through the checklist and ensure the requirements are fully understood.
- The partner completes the checklist.
- DBS reviews all information received and seeks additional information or clarification as required. This process is iterative until both parties are satisfied.

Following this, the collaborative arrangements are set out and agreed in a Consortium Agreement, which is a legal document and sets out the following:

- Parties (partner providers) to the Agreement, including legal names and addresses
- Rights and obligations of all partner parties, the scope of the agreement and the relevant programme(s) and the award(s) that each will lead to
- Responsibilities of each party
- Period of the agreement, including terms for review and amendments
- Financial arrangements
- Arrangements for protection of learners
- Jurisdiction within which the agreement is enacted and should be interpreted.

Programme Agreement

The Programme Agreement within the Consortium Agreement governs the operation of the programme and includes at a minimum the following:

- Admission requirements
- Awards standards
- Intended learning outcomes
- The awarding body
- Programme delivery and assessment strategy
- Membership and responsibilities of the Programme Team
- Details of the QA procedures for the collaborative programme
- Arrangements and provisions of the relevant awarding bodies regarding the monitoring of the quality and standards of the programme
- Details of the responsibilities of the parties regarding the provision of the programme, including:
 - Access, transfer and progression
 - Learning supports
 - Programme delivery and assessment
 - Recruitment
 - Learner protection
 - Intellectual property rights
- Issue of awards including Diploma Supplements.

When this is completed, documentation for the collaborative programme is developed in the standard QQI templates for submission for an application for validation. The curriculum remains the same (potentially with local variants), and the focus is on rationale and evidence towards running the programme and ensuring that there is sufficient capacity and resources.

Evaluation – Overall Process

As evidenced by a successful track record of validating new programmes and re-validating existing programmes, there is an effective process in place to quality assure programme development. However, the validation process is a significant undertaking that can be slow and resource intensive.

In addition to the stages of evaluation for Programme Development set out in the QAH, DBS has mapped out deadlines for submission of completed documents in order to ensure clarity and achievement of timelines to meet the QQI Programmes and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC) approval dates. This is shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Programme Validation and Revalidation milestones

Programme	Docs into Registry (new progs)	Internal Panel (new progs)	PR Reports (revalidation)	Docs into Registry	Docs into QQI	External Panel	Docs Back to Registry	Docs Back to QQI	PAEC
2023/24 Cycle 1	17-Jul	28-Aug	28-Jul	06-Oct	16-Oct	27-Nov	1-Jan	10-Jan	7-Feb
2023/24 Cycle 2	02-Oct	13-Nov	25-Sept	13-Dec	08-Jan	12-Feb	18-Mar	27-Mar	24-Apr
2023/24 Cycle 3	13-Nov	25-Dec	04-Dec	6-Feb	12-Feb	25-Mar	29-Apr	15-May	12-Jun
2023/24 Cycle 4	18-Dec	29-Jan	08-Jan	11-Mar	18-Mar	29-Apr	3-Jun	19-Jun	17-Jul
2024 Cycle 5	26-Feb	8-Apr	25-Mar	20-May	27-May	8-Jul	12-Aug	28-Aug	25-Sept
2024 Cycle 6	6-May	17-Jun	27-May	29-Jul	5-Aug	16-Sept	21-Oct	30-Oct	27-Nov
2024/25 Cycle 1	17-Jul	28-Aug	28-Jul	06-Oct	16-Oct	27-Nov	1-Jan	8-Jan	5-Feb
2024/25 Cycle 2	02-Oct	13-Nov	25-Sept	19-Dec	08-Jan	12-Feb	18-Mar	25-Mar	22-Apr

The table demonstrates the long lead-in time from initial receipt of documentation by the Registrar’s Office to completion of the process. As can be seen, there is a required timeline of 6-7 months from the point of submission of a nearly complete programme. A major challenge within this process is identifying suitable panel members and establishing dates for the panel meeting. Often, the timeline ends up being longer than set out above. This does not capture the lead-in time for actual development for new programmes, or review and development of existing programmes. As such, in bringing a programme forward, there is a risk of missing key milestones, such as Central Applications Office (CAO) choices or submission to the Department of Justice for inclusion on the ILEP³ to allow recruitment of international students. Additionally, there is a real possibility that a programme could be out of date or that competitors have brought alternative programmes to market during the period of development and validation.

An additional challenge arises with resourcing and capacity within Programme Teams. It is vital that development of a programme pulls in expertise from across all areas, but this can be challenging with busy workloads as well as the part-time nature of some faculty. DBS has sought to address this through the work of the ADWG by explicitly including activities such as programme development into new contracts for staff, with clear requirements alongside teaching workloads.

There is also a recognised need to ensure consistency in the process. Despite considerable experience of programme development, as already noted, DBS has had a small number of programmes put forward but refused validation by a panel since 2019. While the percentage is small, the investment of time and resource in developing a new programme is considerable, making the impact of not being successful in the validation process significant. In addition to the small number of new programmes which were unsuccessful, in the current review cycle (2023/24), during the body of work being carried out for revalidation of programmes for intakes in September 2024, weaknesses in the robustness of the review and analysis of data were identified in some areas. This was initially identified for an individual programme as well as the weaknesses regarding data, it was also found that the review process could not be evidenced as explicitly informing the new version of the programme as robustly as it should. The issues in

³ Interim List of Eligible Programmes, the forerunner to the International Education Mark to be introduced in 2024.

the documentation were able to be addressed through the programme lead (in this case the Academic Director) undertaking a further review exercise. While this was an intensive process, the documentation was rewritten to address the deficiencies in the Programme Review Report. The programme and its delivery were considered fundamentally sound. Lessons learned from this have been documented and other programmes currently under review checked to ensure that the required standards are being met. The College has also taken on board the learnings from this and has provided training for Programme Teams in this context. Key learnings are:

- The review process should be sufficiently separate from the programme development process to ensure sufficient focus is given to the review.
- The approach to data analysis in all Programme Reviews needs to be revisited.
- An approval process is required for programmes under review that goes beyond the Registrar's Office compliance review, as aligned with the PASC process for new programmes.

Evaluation – Programme Approval Sub-Committee (PASC)

The PASC was introduced through the review of QA processes carried out for Re-Engagement during 2017–2019.

The PASC was designed to ensure that each new programme passes through approval points before proceeding in the validation process. This is in addition to compliance checks carried out by the Registrar's Office and high-level approval through the Academic Board and SLT. In practice, the implementation of the PASC process has proved to be challenging on a number of levels. In its initial construct, the PASC was designed to be convened out of members of faculty and academic management who were independent of the development process for any particular programme under consideration. Discipline-specific knowledge was not seen as being required in this QA exercise to ensure full due diligence. It is worth noting that it was hoped that membership of the committee would provide valuable CPD, allowing members of the College to gain better understanding of the validation process and form a critical view of their own practice in developing programmes.

However, the quality of feedback received through this process was not deemed useful to Programme Teams and ultimately the quality of programmes in development. Feedback tended towards commentary on presentation of documentation or critique of content contrary to expertise.

The PASC membership and Terms of Reference were therefore reviewed and a new approach piloted in 2023, with a wider membership and representation on the sub-committee. In addition, a checklist was developed to require more structured reporting from each member of the PASC and to fully capture the level of feedback required. In its new design, it was also proposed that programmes under review, not just new programmes, should go through the PASC process. Unfortunately, the pilot was not successful: the process was found to be overly cumbersome and time consuming without providing strong outputs to inform the next stages of programme development.

Therefore, this PASC process is under further review at the time of writing. It remains clear that there should be a mechanism of this sort to provide checks at each stage and to ensure that responsibility does not sit with one single individual. The issues identified with the Programme Review process described above are a case in point here, as is the failure of some programmes to be validated.

Evaluation – Devolved Responsibility

DBS successfully applied for and was granted Devolved Responsibility from QQI in 2021, allowing us to assume responsibility for constructing panels for new programme validations. A strict process is followed whereby QQI approval is required for the panels and programme documentation is still submitted to QQI for screening and approval for the panel review process to commence. The major difference is that DBS retains control of identifying panel members, contracting them, ensuring suitability (subject to QQI agreement), collecting panel documentation and scheduling the panel's activities. The process is time consuming and adds a workload into the process, but this is no different from the work associated with the Review and Revalidation process which already takes place. The Assistant Registrar for Validation and Accreditation assumes responsibility for and manages this process. As the College grows, volumes remain a consideration, and there may be other resourcing requirements.

The calibre of panels assembled by DBS has been consistently very high. In assuming Devolved Responsibility, one of the first programmes to go through this process was in fact refused validation by the panel, demonstrating the independence and robustness of the process. In the formulation of proposed panels assembled for QQI approval, only one proposed panel member has been rejected, on the basis that they had not previously chaired a Masters-level validation event. All other proposed panel members have been approved by QQI as appropriate for the validation or revalidation review. Every panel has met the requirements of representatives from an Irish university, a learner representative, a representative from industry and international academic representatives where the programme under review was at Masters level or carried exceptional features requiring broader perspectives.

As Figure 3 shows, of the fourteen validation panel events held since the assumption of Devolved Responsibility, half were new validations under this new responsibility, four were revalidations under the pre-existing responsibility and three were differential validations, of which two were still managed by QQI directly. These latter panels were retained by QQI as they were for a new transnational delivery for two Masters programmes and a pilot validation panel for a proposed fully online version of an existing Masters programme.

Figure 4 shows the panel outcomes. While both QQI-led validation panels were deemed *Satisfactory subject to conditions set* (which is in part due to the nature of transnational and pilot applications), four of those panels managed by the College were also deemed *Satisfactory subject to conditions set*, and another four were deemed *Satisfactory* (that is, no conditions set). The programme initially refused validation subsequently was deemed *Satisfactory* following revisions to the proposed programme and with a new, larger panel undertaking the review.

Evaluation – Impact on Resourcing

During programme development we have, in the past, set about making changes which, had they been implemented, would have caused delivery issues in terms of capacity or viability. For example, for one programme a proposed change to the ratio of lecturers to learners would have had serious operational consequences in terms of lecturer and classroom capacity. More recently, there is a much more integrated approach to planning for new programmes, and the operational impacts are identified much earlier in the development process.

Year	Organiser	Type of Review	Type of Programme	NFQ Level of Programme	Discipline	No. of Panel Reps	Gender Balance		Institutional Profile (Chair, Academic, learner)				
							Male	Female	Independent	University/ Institutes of Technology (Irish)	College (Irish)	University (International)	Industry
2022	DBS	New validation	Major – MSc	9	Human and Social Sciences	6	2	4	2	1	1	2	1
2022	DBS	New validation	Major – MSc	9	Business, Marketing and Law	6	2	4	2	1	1	1	1
2022	DBS	New validation	SPA – Cert	7	Arts, Languages and Study Abroad	6	3	3	1	1	2	1	1
2022	DBS	Differential validation (new stream)	Major – BA (Hons)	8	Business, Marketing and Law	6	2	4	1	3	1	0	1
2022	DBS	Revalidation	SPA – Diploma	7	Computing	6	4	2	0	2	2	1	1
2022	DBS	Revalidation	Major – MSc Major – HDip SPA – Cert	9 8 7	Accounting and Finance	6	3	3	0	2	2	1	1
2022	QQI	Differential validation (Online)	Major – MSc	9	Business, Marketing and Law	6	3	3	1	2	3	0	0
2022	DBS	New validation	Major – MSc	9	Business, Marketing and Law	7	3	4	2	1	1	2	1
2023	QQI	Differential validation (Transnational)	Major – MSc Major – MSc	9 9	Business, Marketing and Law Computing	5	1	4	1	1	2	0	1
2023	DBS	New validation	Major – MA	9	Arts, Languages and Study Abroad	6	2	4	1	2	1	1	1
2023	DBS	New validation	Major – MA	9	Human and Social Sciences	6	3	3	1	2	1	1	1
2024	DBS	Revalidation	Major – BA (Hons)	8	Accounting and Finance	8	5	3	1	2	1	1	2
2024	DBS	New validation	Major – MSc	9	Accounting and Finance	6	4	2	1	2	1	1	1
2024	DBS	Revalidation	Major – MSc	9	Business, Marketing and Law	6	4	2	1	3	0	1	1

Figure 3 Validation and Revalidation Panel composition since Devolved Responsibility assumed

Year	Organiser	Type of Review	Type of Programme	NFQ Level of Programme	Discipline	Outcome	Number of Commendations	Number of Conditions	Number of Recommendations	Notes
2022	DBS	New validation	Major – MSc	9	Human and Social Sciences	Satisfactory subject to conditions set	2	2	13	
2022	DBS	New validation	Major – MSc	9	Business, Marketing and Law	Not satisfactory	N/A	N/A	N/A	Revised and resubmitted later in 2022
2022	DBS	New validation	SPA – Cert	7	Arts, Languages and Study Abroad	Satisfactory subject to conditions set	8	1	12	
2022	DBS	Differential validation (new stream)	Major – BA (Hons)	8	Business, Marketing and Law	Satisfactory	1	0	7	
2022	DBS	Revalidation	SPA – Diploma	7	Computing	Satisfactory subject to conditions set	5	1	8	
2022	DBS	Revalidation	Major – MSc Major – HDip SPA – Cert	9 8 7	Accounting and Finance	Satisfactory subject to conditions set	7	7	7	Three programmes reviewed together
2022	QOI	Differential validation (Online)	Major – MSc	9	Business, Marketing and Law	Satisfactory subject to conditions set	2	1	6	
2022	DBS	New validation	Major – MSc	9	Business, Marketing and Law	Satisfactory	0	0	7	Revised submission of earlier refused application
2023	QOI	Differential validation (Transnational)	Major – MSc Major – MSc	9 9	Business, Marketing and Law Computing	Satisfactory subject to conditions set	0	5	5	Two programmes reviewed together
2023	DBS	New validation	Major – MA	9	Arts, Languages and Study Abroad	Satisfactory	5	0	9	
2023	DBS	New validation	Major – MA	9	Human and Social Sciences	Satisfactory	1	0	6	
2024	DBS	Revalidation	Major – BA (Hons)	8	Accounting and Finance	In progress – Satisfactory subject to special conditions	7	1	8	In progress as at time of reporting
2024	DBS	New validation	Major – MSc	9	Accounting and Finance	In progress – Satisfactory subject to special conditions	3	2	8	In progress as at time of reporting
2024	DBS	Revalidation	Major – MSc	9	Business, Marketing and Law	In progress – Satisfactory	0	[3]	[11]	In progress as at time of reporting

Figure 4 Outcome of Validation and Revalidation Panels since Devolved Responsibility assumed

With a move towards more multimodal and substantive online delivery, driven both by the requirement from learners for flexibility in learning and the DBS Strategy to increase online and flexible delivery, this has required a change to capacity and expertise within the College. As a consequence of increased online delivery, the College has invested in a dedicated asynchronous content production unit.

Similarly, DBS plans to introduce an increased portfolio of short, stand-alone programmes, whether on the NFQ or not. To facilitate this, as part of the strategy and planning, we are looking at the resourcing and capacity needed to develop and deliver those programmes successfully.

Conclusion

There are established and successful processes for programme development and approval. It is notable that the process is a significant one and is resource intensive for the College. As the College continues to focus on an increased number of niche and specialist areas, there are challenges in terms of ensuring sufficient expertise on Programme Teams to support the development of programmes. An awareness and understanding of areas other than a programme's academic content is necessary to ensure the wider context of any programme is fully supported, such as the management of placements and requirements of professional bodies.

Transnational delivery with partners is an extremely important area for the College regarding both existing validated programmes and opportunities to create new offerings or deliver in new jurisdictions. This will continue to be a focus area and is one where we feel DBS is strong in terms of its validation process and ongoing management.

Given the volume of programmes DBS wishes to develop and the large portfolio requiring cyclical review and revalidation, the College will need to determine and manage an optimal overall volume of programmes. This can align with commercial drivers of the business, adding new programmes and retiring less popular ones. This would help to more effectively manage the ongoing requirement for revalidation and, in parallel, enable a greater focus on effective QA.

Areas for Improvement

1. Consider establishing an optimal volume of programmes for the College to operate at any one time, influenced by viability and QA considerations.
2. To ensure streamlined and effective processes, review the resourcing and workflows of teams undertaking and managing programme development and review, panel coordination and liaison with the awarding bodies.
3. Set out additional internal training and guidelines for new team members undertaking the review or development process.
4. Consider the process for Programme Review and Revalidation such that the Programme Review part is given greater focus and is a clear input to the programme changes.
5. Improve the engagement across programme development and review teams with each other and with operational teams to identify and appropriately manage shared resources, such as room capacities, cross-teaching and multimodal delivery.

Access, Transfer and Progression

Description

Access, transfer and progression describes the pathways available to learners to enter and transfer between and progress from programmes of education and training. DBS implements the NFQ and the procedures for access, transfer and progression as determined by QQI and as set out in our *Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH)*, in compliance with the requirements of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

The DBS Admissions Department ensures diversity and inclusivity in our admissions through procedures that are transparent and equitable, in line with the College's mission and values.

Access

At DBS, we believe that third-level education should be accessible to all, irrespective of background or circumstance. Consequently, our access policies are designed to enable the admission of a broad range of students in order to ensure diversity and inclusivity. These policies serve as pathways for individuals from diverse backgrounds and circumstances to their education journey at DBS. There are several entry routes for students, as follows:

- **Standard Entry:** This refers to those who meet the minimum entry requirements as set out in the QQI-validated programme document.
- **Non-Standard Entry:** This refers to those who do not meet the minimum entry requirements of the programme and who are applying based on significant relevant work experience and life experiences. This pathway recognises the valuable skills and knowledge gained outside of the formal education setting.
- **CAO Applications:** Prospective learners under the age of 23 who wish to apply for full-time study are eligible to apply through the CAO. Each year DBS offers three CAO scholarships to students from local schools within the community, targeting those who are facing hardship as recommended by their prospective schools. All successful scholarship learners must meet the minimum entry requirements.
- **Direct Applications:** These learners range from those seeking full- or part-time study, such as recent school leavers considering part-time study, to those aspiring to pursue postgraduate education or transfer applicants.
- **Mature Applications:** DBS welcomes applicants who, despite not having had the chance to pursue third-level education previously, bring invaluable life experience into the classroom. They are applicants over the age of 23 years on 1 January of the proposed year of entry.

DBS collaborates with partner colleges across Europe and internationally with whom we have established articulation agreements. These agreements formalise the pathway for student admissions, allowing them advanced entry into DBS programmes of study.

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

Transfer and Progression

DBS supports learners to transfer and progress onto other courses both internally and externally. We are committed to supporting the internal transfer and progression of our current student population by carrying out in-class visits to our Level 6, 7 and 8 students to identify clear pathways for how they can progress to the next level. Regarding external transfer, we allow seamless transition of students transferring from other institutions. In such instances, a rigorous review is carried out to evaluate either the transfer of credits already achieved or prior learning experiences. This is carried out by the admissions team and the Academic Director, Programme Level Manager or a subject expert, where relevant, to ensure the College's academic standards and requirements are met.

Monitoring Progression and Completion

To monitor and act on information on learner progression and completion rates, DBS produces an annual Retention Summary Report. Document ISER 14 in the associated confidential folder shows an example of a retention report. This report summarises retention across a suite of disciplines and programmes comprising all full- and part-time Levels 6–9 programmes, Labour Market Activation programmes and non-framework programmes. Academic Directors and Programme Teams use the report when assessing the performance of learners in each of their areas of responsibility. Where low pass rates or downward trends are identified, further analysis in conjunction with the Student Engagement and Success Unit is carried out and interventions put in place which aim to address any issues that may impact on programme delivery.

Programme completion – the number of students who, having started on a programme, successfully remain on the programme until it is completed – is also reported annually.

Evaluation

Information in relation to access, transfer and progression to prospective learners is available on the DBS website. The information is very clear, accurate and informative. All entry requirements are published on each programme page and include the following:

- Programme and award title
- Accrediting body
- Level and type of the award on NFQ
- Programme content
- Application process and entry requirements
- Fees
- Details of the arrangement for the Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL) in accordance with Section 65(4) of the 2012 Act.

However, there is a need to update the programme content of the website as a whole. More details, such as a summary of what each module covers, would be beneficial as this would offer prospective learners a richer understanding of the programme curriculum.

In relation to transfer and progression, there is information on each programme page regarding transfer into our programmes, such as via advanced entry. However, it would be useful to build pathways for each programme onto our own Level 9 Masters courses and clearly define recommended learning pathways for prospective learners. It should be noted that we do not allow advanced entry to Award Stage modules and, therefore, to Higher Diplomas or Masters.

For RPL, there are notable opportunities for improvement within this area. Firstly, there is potential for expanding the pool of non-traditional applicants processed through the Admissions Office. Currently, a very small portion of our student body originates through non-standard pathways. We believe enhancing the visibility of information on our website regarding non-standard pathways would be beneficial. Reviewing prospective learner applications based on RPL can be challenging. There can be a degree of hesitancy in confidently evaluating and approving applicants from alternative pathways when referred to the Programme Team. To address this, it would be beneficial for both academic faculty and admissions QA officers to partake in further training sessions or conferences focused on assessing such applicants based on their experiential learning. Such initiatives could bolster our capacity to effectively evaluate and accommodate a broader spectrum of learners, ultimately enriching the diversity of our student community. The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning has offered training on evaluating RPL. This training has been infrequent, and it would benefit the whole sector if such training were to be made available again. That said, we at DBS need to engage better with training opportunities as they arise.

Where prospective learners are requested to attend an online interview, we have found that there is now a need to introduce a standard interview template where questions would focus on alignment with the programme learning outcomes. The interview would also focus on the candidate's commitment to completing the course and establish where it fits into their overall career aspirations. This approach will ensure that a fair and holistic evaluation is applied, ensuring a consistent approach to all interviews as opposed to a subjective judgement on the interviewer's perspective of the candidates' suitability.

It is worth noting that significant improvements have already been made which have enhanced our policies and operations around access, transfer and progression:

- The move from paper-based files to digital ones: Before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Admissions Office exclusively processed applications through paper-based methods. However, in response to the challenges during this time, we were forced to transition to processing applications digitally. Our website always facilitated the submission of documents during the application stage. However, moving to an online and streamlined approach enabled our Quality Assurance Officers to promptly access and assess the admissions files.
- Online open evenings: A further response to the changes brought about by COVID-19 was the introduction of online open evenings and information sessions. While initially challenging, especially for staff navigating Zoom for the first time, these events have proved to be highly successful. This expanded our access to prospective students regardless of their geographic location, allowing us to connect to a broader audience.
- Introduction of Salesforce: In November 2023, the College implemented a new CRM system, Salesforce, significantly enhancing our ability to manage interactions with prospective students. The platform facilitates comprehensive tracking of enquiries, communications and engagement activities while also consolidating application documents in a centralised repository. As the College continues to grow, we will review processes with a view to further optimising our use of this system.
- Additional Quality Assurance staff: In response to the College's expansion and the increase in the volume of student applications being processed, we sought to recruit additional resources and create a QA team to ensure adherence to our service-level agreements. Previously, we operated with a single QA Officer in Dublin. We felt it would be beneficial to designate specialised admissions staff to focus on applications from specific regions or countries. We therefore recruited two additional resources dedicated to overseeing the Southeast Asia market. These specialist officers possess in-depth knowledge of the education systems and grading scales of these regions, enabling them to evaluate applications more accurately and efficiently. We also have one QA Officer responsible for managing the domestic, European and other international markets.

- Assuring the quality of the admissions process: As discussed earlier, the review by BDO and the Mock DA panel identified a potential conflict of interest in the Admissions Department, where QA officers reported through the management line to the head of the department that recruits students. To mitigate against this risk, these posts were moved to report into the Registrar's Office.

In terms of progression monitoring, the Retention Summary Report provides a comprehensive overview of yearly pass rates by mode of delivery, level, programme and year of delivery. As such, the report is a useful document which quickly and easily identifies pass rates and allows comparison between and within programmes. However, while the Retention Summary Report achieves what it sets out to, by summarising retention it is not collecting information on progression in terms of the number of first-year full-time learners returning in the following academic year and so does not allow benchmarking with the sector. In addition, the report simply summarises annual pass rates and does not report change over time.

Unlike annual pass rates, programme completion reflects change over time, such that an issue which may have arisen and been addressed several years ago will impact completion rates several years into the future. As a result, it is difficult to make use of the data in such a way that will allow 'quick' results.

Conclusion

The evaluation of access, transfer and progression has revealed both areas of strengths and opportunities for improvement. Policies on access, transfer and progression are in place and being followed. Admission from any student in any context is encouraged and accepted.

Information on entry requirements is well communicated to all prospective students. The focus should remain on keeping the presentation of information clear, fair and transparent. Prospective learners receive detailed information on the application process; however, further information on the possibilities of progression pathways is worth considering along with the following.

Areas for Improvement

1. Review all information to applicants to ensure the information provided on programmes and modules is comprehensive.
2. Build pathways for progression with recommended learning routes.
3. Introduce operational enhancements to the process for non-standard applications, to include additional training on RPL applications and templates where interviews are being used.
4. Enhance the reporting of progression and completion through amendments to the current report. In the longer term consider accessing data visualisation tools that will enable better insights and more timely academic decisions

Integrity and Approval of Learner Results

Description

DBS has processes in place to manage the integrity and approval of learner results. This is an end-to-end process that commences before teaching begins and ends with the ratification of learner results. Documentation at the start of this process includes individual module descriptors which specify the learning outcomes expected of students after having completed the particular module and the assessments in place to test and verify those learning outcomes. This documentation forms the basis on which all subsequent assessment procedures and processes are built, and all relevant information is available to all staff in a secure shared folder.

Assessments are developed by faculty. These assessments, whether continuous assessment (CA), exams or capstone projects, must undergo a moderation process. Although CA and exams form the majority of our assessments, dissertations and capstone projects also fall under the scope of moderation.

Each module will have an internal and external moderator assigned by the Academic Director or another academic manager. At the start of each year this information is shared with faculty, who then arrange to establish a relationship with the moderator and ensure the moderation of all assessments is carried out. More information on this process can be found in Part B, Section 5 of our QAH.

Samples of CA and exam submissions by learners are also internally and externally moderated after the initial marking period that faculty complete.

After an examination period (e.g. a semester or academic year), the Exams Office runs internal and external Exam Boards to review all learner result profiles. Faculty attend the internal Exam Board along with the Exams Office team to ensure the full picture is present. Then, an external board is convened where external moderators are invited with faculty and asked to provide feedback on their area of assignment. It is only after this external Exam Board that official results are released by the Exams Office.

There are three main Exam Board cycles throughout the year – winter, summer and autumn – after each of which results are released.

Where a transnational relationship is in place, the same processes as above arise, with the added dimension of a 'buddy' system, where faculty from the overseas institution is paired up with a corresponding DBS faculty member. In addition, all transnational programmes are submitted to the same external exam board as their Dublin-based counterparts. (Note that, other than transnational and domestic collaborations with other delivery partners, which are governed by the same assessment QA as operates for delivery within DBS itself, DBS does not operate out of any centre other than its campus buildings in Dublin city centre.)

The final piece in this process is the overall ratification of results by our Academic Board.

DBS has a large number of unaccredited programmes. In the main, these are from our Professional Diploma suite of programmes or relate to some of our Study Abroad programmes. The processes described above are followed for our unaccredited programmes as well, with some variations. Unaccredited programmes are subject to internal moderation only, with grades overseen via internal boards and not subject to external moderation. Official results for these programmes are then released once the internal board phase has completed. The operation of boards for these programmes is more frequent throughout the year, especially for Study Abroad programmes. For these specific programmes the timing of boards is in line with the requirements of international partner organisations and the need to issue transcripts to those students who have completed the programme.

Evaluation

The assurance of the assessment of a higher education programme is one of the most important tests of a HEI's capacity and QA system. As such, DBS takes assessment very seriously and is confident that the process, while often challenging, always assures the academic results. There are many ways in which processes can be improved, but we can confidently say that the results received by learners are a true reflection of their academic performance.

Each year, DBS manages internal and external Exam Boards for our approximately 8,500 students. The primary boards are held in February and June, with smaller boards throughout the academic year. These cover around 100 accredited programmes, many hundreds of modules, and multiple intakes and modes of delivery. They also cover all our non-accredited courses. A recent Exam Board report had over 1,000 pages, comprising over 4,500 learner records and reflecting the learner profiles from the first semester of 2023/24. This included assessment (CA and exams) from Levels 6 to 9, along with dissertations from our postgraduate learners.

Overall, the outcomes are positive; it is clear that the processes in place are working well and that we can safely be assured that our QA systems are robust. Notwithstanding that, the processes, particularly the internal and external Exam Boards, have been identified as an area for improvement.

From 2018/19 to 2021/22, DBS had approximately 450 Chairs' Actions each year, where results were not presented at Exam Boards on time and required subsequent follow-up by the chair. In 2022/23 this number surpassed 1,000, attributed to the introduction of a new student information system.

A high volume of Chairs' Actions may adversely affect learners' experience, leading to delayed results and disruptions to progression, particularly affecting dissertation cycles. This places undue strain on the Exams Team and frontline staff, resulting in dissatisfaction among learners.

The primary reasons for Chairs' Actions are late marking or result entry by faculty members. This can sometimes result in missing data, including instances of zero grades for non-submission or engagement. Addressing this challenge requires a holistic approach to ensure all data is present and complete for thorough review at Exam Boards.

Regrettably, there are situations where a submission is not marked due to human error. This could be because the learners have submitted work for CA in the wrong location or via email as opposed to the correct channel in our virtual learning environment, Moodle. Otherwise, it could be because a piece of assessment was simply missed. If these exams or assessments go unmarked and are subsequently not challenged at Exam Boards, the learner ends up with an incorrect grade.

To address this issue, DBS is carrying out changes in the systems by which learners will be associated with their relevant Moodle pages, thereby improving the experience of the lecturer as well as the learner. Work is underway to create a clear and simple class list for faculty that can be accessed live and kept up to date to reflect any changes that occur during the academic year, including deferrals or withdrawals. We want to remove any ambiguous situations from faculty to allow them to focus on the active engaged learners.

Another area of focus in our evaluation of these processes is our relationship with External Examiners. Over the past number of years, DBS has introduced an additional QA Officer role to help manage this process. The function sits in the Registrar's Office and ensures that there are timely interventions, where required, with External Examiners. Part B, Section 6.1.5 of the QAH emphasises the importance of the Exams Team in working with External Examiners.

This process includes the appointments process and ensuring the Programme Teams are aware when External Examiners' terms of office are coming to an end and new ones need to be in place. The External Examiner Appointments process is managed through the Academic Appointments Sub-Committee (AASC) to ensure a transparent QA-driven process. More details are available in the Annual AASC Report contained in Appendix 5.

The Exams Office also shares sample assessments with External Examiners in advance of external Exam Boards. It is worth noting that on some occasions this process has not been as timely as we would like and that External Examiners have raised concerns with the College. Thus, this is an area we must improve on. Having timely submissions of samples from our faculty is key to the timely implementation of this part of the process, which is an area of focus for DBS. Samples of feedback from External Examiners is available in Appendix 7, with a tab in place for each form of feedback collected: the Exam Paper review, the Assessment Sample review and the final Annual Report.

Impact of Generative AI on Assessment

The evolution of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) on assessments is a major challenge for our sector. Although not a new phenomenon, GenAI has exploded in the recent past, and the availability of free tools to harness its capabilities is ubiquitous.

As a result, we are faced with a growing number of learners being identified as having potentially breached our academic integrity policies. This may be in many forms, but the use of AI is potentially a major driver in this. Data from 2022/23 and the most recent data from 2023/24 shows that GenAI represented 11.5% of the overall cases of academic impropriety.

In response to the escalating threat posed by GenAI to academic integrity and its ongoing influence, coupled with the rise in academic impropriety more generally, a cross-disciplinary Academic Impropriety Taskforce has been established. This Taskforce serves as a central hub for pooling knowledge and experiences from various levels of the College community, ranging from student representatives to Academic Directors and senior management.

The primary objectives of the Taskforce include identifying emerging trends in academic impropriety that can be fed back to faculty, gaining insights into students' interactions with and perceptions of GenAI and understanding the underlying factors driving students towards improper academic conduct. These insights will inform the development of the College's policies regarding academic integrity and the use of GenAI within the College.

The development of new and innovative assessment design formats will be the most important area for addressing the challenges posed by GenAI. Assessments that require and promote critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as well as authentic assessments with real-world applications that reward the student for genuine engagement with the subject, will not only serve as a deterrent against the inappropriate use of GenAI but will also foster the development of essential skills and competencies that will be desirable and transferable in the workplace. Discussions are underway to incorporate oral presentations as part of the final assessment for all dissertation and projects. This will require students to fully engage with the production of their work in order to be able to properly defend it. These revised assessment strategies not only discourage improper use of GenAI but also foster the development of essential skills that are transferable to the workplace.

Central to the College's approach is the promotion of a culture of academic integrity at all levels. Faculty members are expected to lead by example by upholding the same standards of integrity expected of students. The College provides training and workshops through the Learning Unit to ensure staff adhere to the integrity policy. However, continuous training will also be required to equip staff with the necessary skills to identify and address improper uses of GenAI by students.

The diverse international student body presents unique challenges, as students come to DBS with varied academic backgrounds and expectations. Educational campaigns, in collaboration with student representatives, are conducted to promote good academic practices and emphasise the significance of maintaining academic integrity. Constant communication and updates are essential to help students understand the College's policies regarding the appropriate use of GenAI. For example, the Information Literacy and Research Department of the Library and Academic Hub discusses GenAI in classes and workshops with students on how to avoid academic impropriety when using GenAI tools, discusses GenAI best practice and use with faculty and students in one-to-one meetings, and has developed a research project, [Originaite](#), in which students, faculty and staff are being surveyed to determine how GenAI is currently being used in the academic setting. The survey data, in addition to secondary research and attendance of National Academic Impropriety Network Masterclasses, will be used to develop open-access workshops for students and faculty on best practices and uses of GenAI tools in an academic setting. The project is further detailed in the ninth episode of [RIPEcast](#), a collaborative DBS podcast on research, innovation, practice and enterprise.

Conclusion

As noted above, DBS takes assessing learners and assuring assessment processes very seriously and feels comfortable that the procedures in place always assure the integrity of the academic results.

Despite challenges, the majority of learners navigate this process smoothly, receiving timely grades reviewed in line with our quality assurance (QA) policies. However, acknowledging areas for improvement is important for our own progression. Recent discussions at the Academic Board underscore the importance of compliance with QA processes, with ongoing commitments to address shortcomings. Areas for operational improvement have been identified, including more comprehensive class lists available to lecturers, advance contact with potentially disengaged learners and enhancing the process for producing exam broadsheets in a more timely way.

Our focus remains on enhancing learner outcomes and experiences. DBS is dedicated to effecting necessary changes, recognising the need for some cultural changes to ensure the integrity and approval of learner results. This commitment is reflected in regular discussions at the Academic Board and Senior Leadership Team meetings, demonstrating our readiness to confront challenges head-on.

Areas for Improvement

1. Review processes, systems and resourcing to effect improvement in accuracy and timeliness of data going to Exam Boards.
2. Proactively manage the performance of faculty members who do not correctly or in a timely fashion complete assessment corrections and upload assessment marks to the requisite system.

Information and Data Management

Description

DBS has two primary systems for storing student data. All sales leads and applications are entered and stored in Salesforce, the customer relationship management (CRM) system. Leads and applications can be created in Salesforce via the DBS website, manually by DBS staff and through imports of applications from public systems such as CAO and Springboard+. Applications are then passed from Salesforce to the student information system (SIS), known as TSM, where an academic record is created. Once a student is registered, their academic life cycle is managed in TSM. Student data flows from TSM to all other required systems – such as Moodle, the learning management system, Celcat, the timetabling system, and others – to allow for a single ‘source of truth’ for student data. Students can change their own non-identifying data through the student portal, while identifying data can be changed by logging a request through the IT Service Desk with the relevant supporting documentation.

DBS follows best practice for all security principles and utilises best-in-class systems for cybersecurity and vulnerability scanning. All systems housing data require multi-factor authentication. The entire organisation places the highest importance on cybersecurity. Staff accounts are integrated with Workday, the human resources information system, and are automatically created or deleted depending on employment status. Similarly, a student’s own DBS account is integrated with TSM, which controls student access to systems.

The Data Analytics and Reporting Manager assists the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) in ensuring that all academic management and staff have high-quality data and the reports they need to actively manage academic delivery and effect change.

Reports cover areas such as attendance, Moodle engagement, pass rates, module feedback and more; these are published at regular intervals or on an ad hoc basis. These reports may be circulated as required to the Academic Board, SLT, Academic Directors, Faculty Managers and others, or may be used by our Student Engagement and Success Unit at a local level to identify students at risk and in need of an intervention.

Mandatory staff GDPR compliance training is carried out for all new hires and is required to be repeated yearly. New systems must have a Data and Security Privacy Impact Assessment completed and approved before going live. Data breaches have a 1-hour deadline to be reported to the Security and Compliance Team. This team also handles GDPR Subject Access Requests.

Evaluation

The systems used for cybersecurity are constantly under review in conjunction with our parent company, Graham Holdings. Using multiple products while ensuring the highest standards of security can cause a burden on the DBS IT team, but given the importance of data security, a new role – Network Security Administrator – has been created to assist in protecting College data. Incident response exercises are carried out with the IT team and the Director of Campus Operations. We have noted that it would be beneficial if these were made more widely available across the business.

As referenced above, data used in decision making needs to be of the highest quality. During the data migration from our old SIS to TSM, the quality of data was impacted, which has affected our ability to make timely and informed academic decisions. We have formed a Data Integrity Working Group to address this issue, which is helping, though the quality of the data has had a significant impact on our reporting ability.

As we moved from one SIS to another, reports had to be rebuilt. This has been and continues to be a slow process, but we are moving in the right direction. Reports are being developed by different departments, and while it is understandable that people need their reports quickly, it has resulted in an absence of a unified approach in relation to terminology and format.

While the presence of TSM is beneficial and the reports to extract data are almost complete, there is still much more potential given the volume of data available. It would be useful to employ data visualisation or business intelligence tools that would allow the SLT, Academic Directors and others to undertake further, higher-level analysis over time to inform more meaningful decisions.

In general, compliance with data legislation is of a high standard; this, of course, relies on the human element to report incidents. Subject Access Requests are very onerous and becoming more frequent, thereby demanding ever more resources to manage. To ensure that all employees clearly understand Graham Holdings Company's expectations in this area, the *Code of Business Conduct* is mandatory for all new hires to read during their onboarding process, and mandatory training is required to be undertaken by all employees on an annual basis. The Code is available in Document ISER15 in the associated confidential information folder.

The *Code of Business Conduct* establishes the foundation for legal and ethical standards at DBS and explores many of the standards that contribute to an environment that supports this. The Code includes the following policies:

- Conflict of Interest
- Protecting Company Information
- Introduction to Financial Integrity
- Legal Integrity
- Duty to Report.

Once each year, DBS requires designated managers and employees across its divisions to complete a certification of compliance with certain governance policies and practices covered by the Company's *Code of Business Conduct*. To ensure all relevant staff members have been reminded of the requirements concerning disclosure of interest under relevant Graham Holdings policies, DBS is also implementing a local conflict of interest register where all staff will be required to complete a questionnaire per annum which follows the same disclosure parameters as outlined by Kaplan Group.

Conclusion

DBS considers cybersecurity of the highest priority, and while a system can never be 100% secure, we are confident that we are taking all possible measures to protect the organisation. As noted above, we have experienced some challenges with the data migrated from the old SIS; there is a plan to rectify this, and while it is taking longer than expected, we are making good progress. Compliance with data legislation is of a high standard and will remain a high priority for the organisation.

Areas for Improvement

1. Complete the cleansing of data migrated from the old student information system to the new system and complete the production of a full suite of reports that accesses the correct data on the system.
2. Employ business intelligence tools to enable high-level analysis and identification of trends.
3. Consider introducing business continuity incident response exercises across the College.

Public Information and Communications

Description

The College recognises it is responsible for the accuracy of the information that it puts into the public domain. Therefore, it must ensure the validity of such information for transparency with its stakeholders. The College has a number of vehicles for communicating with applicants and students: the DBS website, incorporating a specific portal dedicated to current students, the QAH and programme-specific handbooks.

DBS Website

The website is the primary vehicle for the provision of information about the programmes and services of the College to potential students and other interested stakeholders. The website presents detailed information about the background to the College, its staff, mission, aims and values. The site also includes information on all programmes, detailing modules, duration of programmes, NFQ level, entry requirements, fees and application procedures.

The published information on programmes for learners includes:

- Programme and award title
- Accrediting body
- Level and type of award on the NFQ
- Programme content
- Application process and entry requirements
- Fees
- Details of the arrangement for the Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL) in accordance with Section 65(4) of the 2012 Act.

Examples of the College's main publications include:

- [DBS Strategic Plan 2021-2025](#)
- [DBS Quality Assurance Handbook](#)
- [Programme Review and Validation Reports](#)
- [DBS Student Handbooks](#)
- [Full-Time Undergraduate Programmes](#)
- [Postgraduate Programmes](#).

DBS also uses other platforms to disseminate information and updates, including the following.

Social Networking Sites

DBS communicates with the public across a number of social media platforms. The current social media channels used on a regular basis include Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn and X. Other channels, including YouTube and TikTok, are used intermittently. Social media is used for notification of open evenings, information evenings and other activities such as partner events. Any new courses or imminent application deadlines are communicated, and relevant educational news from DBS or other educational bodies is also shared. Social media inboxes are monitored regularly so that queries connected to any communications are promptly followed up.

College e-Newsletter(s)

Newsletters are emailed to all College contacts available through the database on a regular basis. This includes prospective students, current and past students and staff, agents, contacts in employer agencies and relevant professional bodies and associations. The purpose of this e-newsletter is to maintain contact with all stakeholders and provide updates on College activities, achievements and developments in relation to programmes and services.

College Prospectuses and Marketing Materials

Several prospectuses and publications are produced containing all marketing materials relevant to the recruitment of new students into programmes. These are also hosted on the website as well as being distributed to prospective students at fairs, schools, open evenings, reception areas and by post, if requested. In recent years we have reduced the quantity printed as many prospective students prefer to view them online.

College Open Days and Information Sessions

The College runs open days and information sessions at which potential students and other interested parties can meet with College staff and receive information about the programmes and services available and opportunities available through the College. These are mainly online, but since 2023 we have had a return to some on-campus events.

Participation in Conferences and Educational Recruitment Fairs

The College participates in conferences and educational recruitment fairs locally and internationally to provide information to potential students and other interested parties about the programmes available and to promote the College.

School Visits

DBS has a dedicated School Liaison Officer who works closely with career guidance teachers and schools in ensuring provision of correct information about the programmes on offer through the CAO system. A number of school visits are carried out annually around Ireland.

Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH)

The QAH has been referenced many times throughout this document. It is the source of definitive information on all academic policies and associated procedures. The Re-engagement Process with QQI significantly revised the QAH. It was originally laid out to mimic the sequencing of the QQI *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines* (2016). While originally useful for administrative purposes in evidencing compliance with these guidelines, the most recent revision after Re-Engagement sought to make the document more accessible for the learner. We broke up the QAH into three parts: Governance, the Learner Journey and Programme Quality. While all have a bearing on the learner, this restructuring was intended to make the *Handbook* easier for learners and staff to engage with.

Quality Assurance Reports

In fulfilment of QQI's validation requirements, and to demonstrate the principles of transparency in QA, a suite of QA reports are published on the DBS website in addition to their publication by QQI. The two forms of reports published are:

- Programme Review and Validation Reports
- Accreditation and Quality Review Reports

The Programme Review and Validation Reports publish the Independent Evaluation Report for the corresponding programme and links to QQI's published record of the programme.

The Accreditation and Quality Review web page primarily summarises the fundamental review processes, including Institutional Review and Re-Engagement. The page also includes links to the Annual Quality Reports and their supplementary information.

Programme Handbooks

Programme Handbooks are prepared for each programme in advance of the commencement of the September term and published on the student website in [clusters of aligned discipline areas](#). While the Handbooks share common features that apply to all learners in the College, and which typically summarise information published elsewhere on the website and covered in the learner induction sessions, they also address programme-specific details such as module outlines and special programme regulations.

Website for Current Students

DBS communicates with active students through a variety of channels. As noted above, we host a dedicated [student section](#) on the DBS website, where a centralised information repository exists. This site is regularly updated and maintained by various functional departments within DBS, such as Academic Operations, Exams and Student Experience. Typical information that is posted on this site is academic calendars, exam dates, student events and support services including IT. The student site focuses on the student journey and main needs of the student during the academic year. The aim of the student site is to answer questions and queries for students in a clear and concise format.

Direct Student Communications

Throughout the student journey there are various communications sent to students, usually via email, in relation to matters throughout the academic year such as exams, results release, class attendance and matters relating to College life. Within the Academic Operations Department, the Academic Administrator (Communications) is responsible for coordinating these messages, and they send mass communications to students where required. This person is also responsible for sending daily communications to students around class changes and other time-dependent information.

Evaluation

DBS communicates with the public through a number of channels. However, the [DBS website](#) is the main communication channel. A standard convention is also used on each programme page outlining awarding body, NFAQ Level, type of award, title and duration. DBS has also published the *DBS Strategic Plan* on its website since 2021.

The current website needs an overhaul from a user experience perspective, and this is in the IT project plans for the last quarter of 2024. There is also a need to improve the content on the site, particularly on programme pages, ensuring that when programmes are (re)validated the information passed to the Marketing Department is accurate, accessible and timely. This is currently a challenge for the College and can be improved. Also, when publishing QA information, the website could be made more accessible, and a review is required to ensure it is up to date.

DBS has a strong presence on a range of social media channels, and campaigns are executed well in partnership with external agencies. Some more in-depth analysis is required internally using data insights to improve how we can better measure the effectiveness of the campaigns.

DBS has a set of branding guidelines since it re-branded in 2019. This is available to all staff on the staff portal and is generally used with good practice when promoting the brand and the College.

Reaching all of our target groups can be a challenge given the portfolio of programmes, and not all can be represented in our marketing campaigns. In 2023 DBS introduced a series of information sessions dedicated to individual CAO programmes and specific postgraduate and evening degrees. These were well received and attended and provided prospective students with more detailed information on their programme of interest.

There are a number of possible enhancements that have already been identified. One of greatest significance is the development of a new dynamic website for the public, which is planned for the first quarter of 2025. This will include a dedicated area (one stop shop) regarding QA for learners.

On the student portal, the content is updated regularly, but currently some of the content is duplicated and can be difficult for students to find quickly without direction. Students have access to a personalised dashboard where they can update their personal details and view their exam results. As a result of a system upgrade, this dashboard is split across two different portals, and even though there is a direct link on the [student portal](#), it can create confusion for students as to what system their information is stored in. A clear opportunity for improvement exists.

In relation to the information in the *QAH* and, in particular, its accessibility, from 2019 a new tracker of *QAH* changes was established and published for transparency. The tracker publishes amendments, updates and corrections to the *QAH* to evidence the development of policies and regulations. A core goal of this new tracker was to ensure learners who were impacted by changes in policy and regulation could identify when changes were implemented, both to be aware of developments and to be equipped to respond to College decisions based on newly introduced policies. Similarly, the tracker allows internal stakeholders and policymakers to evaluate the applicability of policy decisions' to particular cases where the policy has been updated while cases were in effect or being reviewed. Figure 5 shows the changes made to the *QAH* between 2019 and 2023.

QAH Section	Change Type					Grand Total
	Amendments	Correction	Formatting	New Policy	Updates	
Section A Changes	20	8	0	6	21	55
Section B Changes	58	5	0	4	47	114
Section C Changes	11	0	0	2	5	18
Throughout Handbook Changes	0	5	3	0	9	17
Appendices Changes	1	0	0	2	0	3
TOTALS	90	18	3	14	82	207

Figure 5 QAH changes July 2019 to December 2023, by section

We felt over the past few years that changes in the policies and guidance set out in the *QAH* could be more effectively communicated to staff. To assist, the Registrar's Office commenced weekly Real-Time EdTech Support, with Quality Guidance (RESq) emails to alert local and transnational stakeholders of any significant changes to policy or the introduction of new policies.

RESq is a Registrar's Office initiative. In addition to emails, we also introduced a weekly open drop-in Q&A space for faculty and administrative staff to raise questions about policies, procedures, supports or academic practice. These sessions are hosted by the Quality Assurance Officer. This was initiated in July 2019 following the Re-engagement Process and in recognition of the significant policy update and restructuring of the *QAH* implemented at that time. Initially, the sessions were held on site with an opportunity to dial in remotely if needed. The weekly email raises the awareness across the institution of the RESq event, and a recurring event was added to the College's collective DBS Events calendar. The weekly email alert includes key stakeholders in the transnational and collaborative partner institutions to maintain an ongoing awareness of College activities, key events, policy updates and support opportunities. These sessions also serve as an opportunity to tease out the particulars of individual cases with regulatory advice within the policy parameters.

Initially, attendance at the RESq sessions was irregular and limited. To increase engagement, sessions were scheduled during a specific time slot, but conflicts with teaching schedules persisted. Hosting sessions at alternative times was not feasible due to time constraints. During the COVID-19 pandemic, sessions transitioned online, resulting in improved attendance. The session title was changed to RESq to broaden appeal and accommodate support from the Learning Unit. Weekly notifications introduced specific topics to attract faculty. Increased attendance and engagement resulted from new faculty onboarding efforts. Weekly emails now include information on institutional events and encourage participation in the College's community of practice. Additionally, the Assistant Registrar has implemented a standing item in this communication incorporating information on Generative AI.

Conclusion

There is already considerable provision in how information is presented to the public from a quality assurance (QA) perspective. However, this could be further enhanced through the development of a new website and a more streamlined QA section for students. The outcome of the Institutional Review will also be published on the website.

While we have done much work to improve the effectiveness of communication to learners on QA information, further progress could be made in communicating *QAH* changes to learners. It is recognised that policy matters are rarely of interest to learners until such time as they are directly impacted by them. Very little response has been received when major policy changes have been introduced and student-wide notices have been circulated, such as at the removal of award capping following QCI's amendment to the Sectoral Conventions in 2022. The communication of these updates tends to be caught up in the high volume of communication circulated within the College, particularly around key points of the calendar year, such as the start and end of term, assessment periods or Exam and Academic Boards.

Real-Time EdTech Support, with Quality Guidance (RESq) is a valuable resource for staff. Our intention is to improve the promotion of this initiative to drive attendance. With an increasing number of faculty joining DBS due to growth and natural attrition, we believe this is a great opportunity to keep staff informed and educated on our policies and processes. Work is beginning early in the second quarter of 2024 to improve how we promote the RESq. As we continue to grow as an institution, this will continue to support the development of our faculty and staff.

Areas for Improvement

1. Complete operational improvements to enhance the clarity of and accessibility to public information (e.g. website redesign, procedures for appropriate programme communication from academic departments to the Marketing Department, and others).
2. Review the volume and type of communications sent to active learners with a view to streamlining or identifying improved channels.

Other Parties Involved in Education and Training

In this section we outline three types of other parties with whom the College has a partnership: articulation partners, transnational collaborative partners and Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) partnerships.

Articulation Partners

Description

In all cases where DBS enters into engagements with external partners, QA procedures are in place to ensure our learners receive the appropriate learning opportunities and that our learners are safe and protected. These procedures are set out further in Chapter 3.

Through its inter-institutional partnerships, DBS remains cognisant of all legislative requirements underpinning the various strands of collaboration it is engaged in. At present, DBS has a range of partnerships and collaborations of varying degrees of engagement, with the most popular being learners coming for one semester to Dublin for Study Abroad. These occur in award programmes certified by QQI. The Study Abroad opportunities arise from Memorandum of Understanding agreements the College has with a number of Higher Education Institutions, mainly in Europe and the United States.

Our QA procedures include provision for engagement with external partners and a formal due diligence stage. The College exercises due diligence in so far as partners are selected on the basis of their good reputation and standing within their geographical location. Other criteria that are considered include their programme offerings, alignment with DBS missions and values, cultural fit and any other international partnerships they hold.

Learners coming from partner colleges have their admissions processed through the recognition of prior learning (RPL) process. Where a group of students is coming to DBS, the partner college's syllabus is submitted for review and is assessed by the Academic Director of the subject area or designate.

Study Abroad learners add to the diverse cultural and social learning environment, providing all learners with an opportunity to experience different outlooks and approaches to study. Each cohort of Study Abroad learners is provided with pre-departure orientation, a comprehensive induction and full and equal access to all DBS services and IT systems; they also become fully registered DBS students. In addition, a Study Abroad Student Experience Officer and Study Abroad Coordinator are in position to support the learners' adaptation and integration into the DBS academic community. A class representative for each cohort is appointed, training provided and views and feedback sought twice per semester. Each learner registered for a programme or module is identified for each faculty member and their learning pathway explained. Learning achieved is recorded in TSM, the student information system, and subject to the moderation and ratification processes of internal and external examiners and the DBS Examination Boards and subsequent approval of the Academic Board. Specific and detailed reports on particular cohorts are prepared, and these reports along with student and faculty feedback inform recommended changes to the detail of an articulation agreement. Document ISER 21 in the associated confidential information folder includes a sample report.

Evaluation

As a long-established system in DBS that operates at significant scale and scope, the QA, due diligence and operational processes maintain a level of success that sustains old and new partnerships. Despite this, it takes considerable time to establish and approve the articulation agreements that underpin our partnerships. It is identified here that the core panel of RPL reviewers in each discipline is relatively small and that more trained reviewers will be of some assistance in meeting our strategic goal to develop more partnerships. It is noteworthy that the semesterised nature of education programmes in the EU facilitates the easiest assimilation of Study Abroad learners into the DBS system in our September intake. However, while semesterisation within programmes and of modules is not consistent across all programmes and disciplines, cohorts in January have less choice and diversity of learning opportunities. Improving this has been recognised and identified as an achievable goal over a 4-5-year time scale.

Conclusion

DBS has gained a lot of experience over the years with its articulation partners. As this area continues to grow, further consideration and training is required to establish more dedicated review panels in subject areas to conduct recognition of prior learning reviews. The College would also benefit from a guidance document outlining the development and process of approval of articulation agreements. This would be available to all staff and would include principles around articulation agreements and the permitted models of collaboration, the approval process step by step (including programme mapping) and the monitoring and review process for these types of partners.

Transnational and Collaborative Partners

Description

The transnational and collaborative arrangements, which are referenced earlier in this chapter and set out in further detail in Chapter 3, each carry shared and unique QA elements due to their particular operational and academic requirements. The responsibility of QA for transnational and collaborative arrangements rests with DBS, and all partners commit to meet those standards. The nature of the QA elements depends on the following criteria:

- Systems
 - Which virtual learning environment is learning managed through
 - Which student management system are learners held on
- Delivery
 - Whether the cohorts are cross-taught with standard DBS learners
 - Special requirements for the programme
- Support
 - First point-of-contact responsibility for student management and supports
 - First point-of-contact responsibility for IT supports
- Faculty
 - Faculty recruitment and employment contracts.

Where learner records are maintained on the College's student management system and hosted in the same Moodle system as standard learners, the standard College operational and QA arrangements apply. Where the virtual learning environment is separate from the College's Moodle system, a direct liaison between the partner institution and the DBS Exams Office, Academic Operations Office and Registrar's Office is in place to facilitate the management of learner records and grades. Grades and final awards are reviewed during the standard College Exam Board processes.

Where learners are cross-taught with standard DBS learners, the standard College operational and QA arrangements apply. Where learners are not cross-taught with other DBS learners, compliance with the College's requirements and standards is overseen through a faculty 'buddy' system of peer oversight, the internal moderation process, centralised management by a transnational partnership lead or Academic Director, and a shared External Examiner process. For the long-standing transnational partnership with KPTM in Malaysia, this is supplemented with DBS faculty undertaking lecturing in Malaysia and the opportunity for some Malaysian faculty to visit the Irish classrooms and observe delivery.

The support systems in place for learners are reviewed formally through the due diligence exercise prior to a partnership being established, and subsequently through annual reporting and the cyclical revalidation mechanism. The transnational and collaborative partners undertake the same review of their resources, supports and facilities as the College's teams in the review of their programmes. The cyclical review can entail a site visit by the validation panel to verify the reporting received for this review.

Faculty delivering the programme through the transnational or collaborative partner are required to go through the same review by the Academic Appointment Sub-Committee (AASC) to ensure suitability in terms of qualifications and discipline alignment. Partners raise proposed faculty through the dedicated role, the Content Development and Partnership Manager, to be reviewed by the AASC. These faculty have access to the same academic and EdTech training resources as Dublin-based DBS faculty, albeit responsibility for managing direct training needs and queries is managed by the partnership lead within the transnational or collaborative partner. Faculty from the transnational or collaborative partners are invited to the relevant Programme Team meetings, and representatives from partners are members of the College's Learning and Teaching Committee.

The Academic Director includes an update on the transnational and collaborative partnership programmes in their Programme Board Reports, which feed into the Board of Studies and Academic Board reporting processes, alongside the standard College programme reports.

Evaluation

The longest-standing transnational partnership, with KPTM in Malaysia, has a well-established mechanism of ongoing liaison between the faculty in both partners and a shared External Examiner process. The Director of Studies in KPTM liaises directly with the Academic Director and Registrar's Office as required, and Exam Board schedules have successfully integrated this programme's learner records such that representatives from KPTM can attend the online Exam Boards, verify the grades awarded, and have an input regarding any borderline records. The move to fully online Exam Boards, a result of the pivot during COVID-19, has been a significant improvement in this mechanism, allowing greater engagement from these stakeholders simply by having made access easier.

The newer transnational partnerships largely follow the model set by the KPTM relationship; however, the deployment of learning through a separate virtual learning environment by EU Business School has necessitated a manual transition of data from their student management systems to the DBS systems. While a centralised grade tracker has been established and is managed by the Registrar's Office, the manual transfer of grades into the system will not be scalable as the numbers attending EU Business School continue to grow, and a more systematic approach will be required once the new student management system has been fully implemented.

The Examiner Report mechanism, an online reporting system based within Google Workspace, has not been as neatly accessible for faculty in transnational partners. This reporting mechanism relies on the standard email format within the College for staff, and non-DBS email addresses are not supported. Access to shared drives is also curtailed by institution-wide Google Drive settings for non-DBS email accounts. Workarounds have been established, such as the Transnational Examiner Report, a replication of the standard report mechanism, and a dedicated Drive folder under the QA inbox for an equivalent to shared drive access for transnational partners. However, these alternatives necessarily mean subdivision from other records and folders.

The shared oversight through the internal moderation process, supported by the 'buddy' system and visiting lecturing sessions, and the singular External Examiner oversight and Exam Board mechanism, has been successful in ensuring consistency across cohorts and in delivery.

Conclusion

The quality assurance mechanisms in place for transnational and collaborative partnerships vary slightly between each partnership, subject to their particular needs and requirements. However, the overall mechanisms have been effective in the existing partnerships. Further consideration of the dedicated resourcing to manage the oversight of the partnerships and learner records would be beneficial to meet the demands of scaling growth, while future partnerships will benefit from integrated systems at an early point in the due diligence and agreement process. Validation panel feedback has recommended increased mobility for visiting lecturing in both directions between partners, which the College could leverage further for greater integration with partners. The transition of some governance and oversight bodies – such as Exam Boards, Academic Board, Board of Studies and Programme Team meetings – to online meetings, has been a beneficial development, and further embracing the opportunities of online forums, such as in teaching and assessment, is aligned to the strategic objectives of the College.

Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB)

Description

DBS has ten programmes that are recognised by a professional, statutory or regulatory body.

At undergraduate level they are:

- BA (Hons) in Accounting and Finance, where exemptions are awarded by ACCA and CIMA to some of their professional papers
- BA (Hons) in Psychology, approved by the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI)
- BA (Hons) in Counselling and Psychotherapy, approved by the Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP)
- Bachelor of Laws (Hons) is designed to facilitate progression to the Law Society of Ireland (Solicitors) and is approved by the Honourable Society of King's Inns for the purpose of eligibility to sit the entrance exams for the Barrister-at-Law degree programme.

At postgraduate level they are:

- Higher Diploma in Arts in Psychology, also approved by PSI
- Higher Diploma in Counselling and Psychotherapy and the MA in Psychotherapy, recognised together as a 4-year training programme by the Irish Association for Humanistic Integrative Psychotherapy (IAHIP)
- MA in Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy, recognised by the Association for Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy in Ireland (APPI)
- MSc in Information and Library Management and its embedded Postgraduate Diploma exit award, accredited by the Library Association of Ireland (LAI)
- MSc in Human Resource Management, approved by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD).

The quality assurance of programmes with PSRB accreditation is underpinned by the same QA system as all other programmes. The policies and procedures outlined in the *QAH* and applicable to validated programmes apply to all programmes with PSRB accreditation.

Up to 2022 DBS had a Level 7 and a Level 8 programme in social care, which were designed with the intent of getting approval from CORU. This approval did not materialise, and these programmes were withdrawn by DBS and subsequently were no longer validated.

Evaluation

The most significant matter for consideration in relation to PSRB is the application made by DBS to CORU, the health and social care regulator, for approval of the social care programmes. The programmes fall under the remit of CORU for recognition of the protected title of Social Care Worker. As such, it is necessary for any programme to go through a recognition and approval process with CORU. As the CORU recognition process is evidence-based, programmes must have been running before an application can be made to CORU.

The core requirement for CORU recognition for social care programmes is a 3-year Level 7 programme. DBS sought approval for both its Level 7 and Level 8 programmes. Its application to CORU to commence the process for recognition of the programmes was made in September 2021, with submission of the documentary evidence in February 2022, as per agreed timelines with CORU. Following feedback received from CORU, whereby issues identified by the CORU Review Team suggested that the application would not be successful, DBS withdrew its application pending further internal discussion on next steps. This was done with the intent of protecting the programmes from outright failure in the process with no recourse.

Following this, the students on the programme were informed and given options that would lead them to successfully becoming eligible to apply to the register of social care workers when it would open.

Communicating with the students led to a significant wave of negative social media coverage, which was very quickly picked up by mainstream media, and the matter ultimately became political. The matter caused many issues for the students and for DBS institutionally. We undertook our own analysis of the matter and commissioned an external review of the matter by a higher education consultant. The purpose of the external review was to i) identify the root causes and other factors that contributed to the decision to withdraw the application for approval; ii) identify the roles played by both QQI and CORU in the lead-up to the decision to withdraw; iii) the response of both CORU and QQI after this decision was made and students were told; and iv) make recommendations for changes DBS should implement to ensure this or similar could not happen again. QQI also undertook a Focused Review following the events.

The internal analysis referred to above was conducted to understand how this came about. Our analysis showed that there were a number of factors that contributed to the matter relating to the Applied Social Care programmes.

This was the first application for approval that DBS made to CORU. While the criteria were clear and the submission was made against the criteria, the quality of the submission made was not sufficient to meet the requirements of CORU. The internal DBS processes that applied at the time as they related to professional bodies was insufficient and therefore did not challenge the quality of the submission. The people writing and reviewing the submission document leaned on their experience of the academic programme approval process and were not sufficiently versed or trained on the process for preparing and submitting statutory approval documents. CORU did offer guidance on how to complete a submission. However, DBS staff found it technical in its nature and felt that it did not provide the more qualitative or formative assistance that would have been to the benefit of a new application for approval. Thus, DBS staff leaned on our own best understanding of what a submission to CORU should look like.

The points above arose because of custom and practice within DBS which places the responsibility for a professional relationship with discipline experts. As noted earlier, we have professional relationships with bodies like ACCA, CIPD, PMI, PSI, IAHIP, IACP and others, all of which are managed successfully by members of the academic Programme Team. We applied the same approach to CORU, placing the responsibility for the relationship and the interactions with the Programme Team. This has subsequently changed.

The submission made by DBS to CORU was not the only factor in this matter. Elements of the programme construct needed to be changed. CORU indicated that the credit weighting of the placement modules was too low, notwithstanding that the total number of hours attached to the placements were correct and met the CORU requirements. They also indicated that the learning outcomes of the placement modules did not demonstrate constructive alignment of the achievement of the standards of proficiency. These factors were more difficult for DBS to comprehend as the placement modules, delivered in both stages 2 and 3, were exactly as set out in the programme document approved at validation. A condition of the Level 7 Programme Validation was that the programme be mapped against the CORU guidelines. This mapping was done. It satisfied the experts on the QQI panel and was subsequently approved by the QQI Programmes and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC) approval meeting. The matter identified a weakness in the QQI Programme Validation process where approval by a professional body is required in addition to QQI's approval of the programme. The fact that the programme could run for 4 years without a requirement for CORU to assess if it met its criteria has transpired as fatal to the DBS programmes. Since then, QQI has established a set of Principles for Professional Engagements with Education Providers, including Programme Validation, Professional Accreditation and Approval.

A further contributing factor is the fact that CORU does not review programmes for approval prior to student intake; they only review or accept an application once students are on a programme. This meant the programme could not be reviewed in 2018, when the Level 7 was validated, or in 2019 when the first intake started. The earliest it could have been reviewed was 2020, and in that year CORU did not review any applications. The first engagement with DBS about making an application was March 2021. This meant that even if we had reached the same result as in 2022, we would have been managing a solution to the matter a year earlier than we did, and the matter would have impacted about 40% fewer students.

The matter was a significant challenge for the College to deal with and one that was not identified in the risk register prepared for 2022.

From our own analysis, and subsequently supported by the DBS-commissioned review and the QQI Focused Review, we identified changes to make, as follows.

- The relationship with professional bodies had always been managed at the discipline level. This changed whereby all PSRB relationships are now managed at the institutional level. In practice, this means that the owner of the relationship is from the Registrar's Office and all formal communication, including the submission of request for approval or retention of approval, is managed through the Registrar's Office.
- A new approval process has been implemented internally to sign off on submissions to professional bodies. Figure 6 outlines the steps and the key elements, showing that there is a more rigorous review internally followed by the convening of an external panel of experts to assess the suitability of the submission. This was submitted to the Academic Board for its approval.

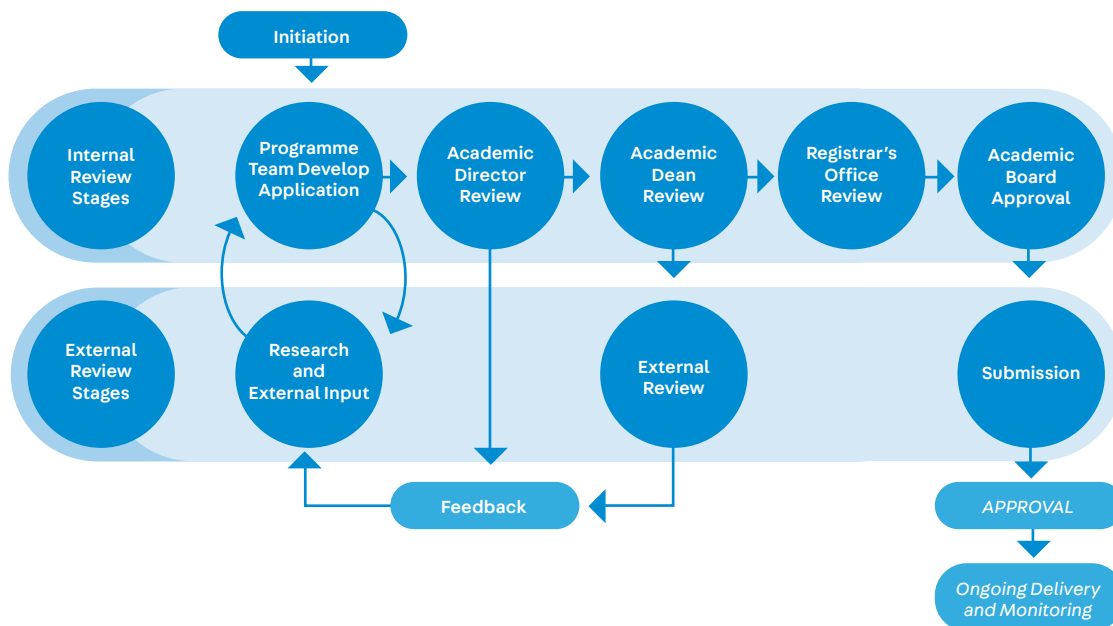


Figure 6 PSRB approval process

Conclusion

DBS is now in a much stronger position than it was previously in the management of relationships with Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB). The view in the sector is that we were unlucky in our engagement with CORU, partly because we were the first institution to withdraw a programme from the accreditation process. This may be the case, but it is not relevant. We learned from what happened and put in place new systems to ensure a more effective governance of the relationship with PSRB and of meeting their requirements. A risk register is now in place for every discipline which takes account of the specific risks associated with programmes that have a PSRB requirement, specifically noting the risk of losing PSRB accreditation or withdrawing from a PSRB approval process.

Areas for Improvement
1. Annually review the risks related to Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies accreditation compliance on all programmes to which it applies.
2. Consideration the quality assurance resourcing within the DBS Registrar’s Office in the event that transnational and domestic collaborations increase in line with the stated objectives of the College.

Research, Enterprise and Innovation

Description

DBS recognises that research is an integral part of what we do as an academic institution and that this is crucial to teaching and learning as well as essential to the growth of knowledge and its transference. The College recognises the importance of research in enhancing the learning experience of students, in attracting and retaining faculty, and in forging links with the wider academic community and industry. At DBS, we ensure the quality of our teaching and learning through SLATE2, the latest iteration of the DBS Strategy for Learning and Teaching Enhancement. SLATE2 is defined by three goals:

1. Outstanding Learning: 'A measurable engaging transformative learning experience that ensures our graduates are prepared for employment'
2. Immersive Learning: 'A learning environment that learners can immerse themselves in totally anytime and anywhere'
3. Ecosystem of Learning: 'An effective and complex interconnected network of people, processes and activities that recognises that all members of DBS at all times are empowered and impacting the learning experience'.⁴

These concerns were then mirrored in the creation of our new Research Strategy for January 2024–December 2026: *Research, Innovation, Practice and Enterprise 2023*, also known as *RIPE 23*. Building on the quality assurance for teaching and learning, this document also outlines a system for integrating quality into research and enterprise activities across the College through its own tripartite structure. This document outlined the three main areas of research concern for the College going forward:

1. Excellence: Advancing Research and Innovation for Societal Impact
2. Research-Led Teaching and Staff Enhancement: Promoting Research Excellence and Impactful Outcome
3. Industry-Focused Research: Fostering Innovation and Driving Enterprise Success through Research.⁵

Research activity is an important barometer of the quality of faculty at DBS. In the last yearly report by the Practice Research Coordinator and Research Librarian, a definite effect was recorded in efforts to increase research activity. In recognition of this, DBS routinely includes the research output of programme faculty in the documentation submitted to QQI for Programme Review and Validation of new programmes, which also aligns with the *DBS Strategic Plan*.

In addition, seeking to further raise awareness of research excellence at DBS, a new podcast series called *RIPEcast* has been launched by the Senior Lecturer Team. Released weekly and shared on platforms such as Spotify and LinkedIn, *RIPEcast* seeks to shed light on both internal and external activities in the areas outlined in the retitled research strategy document, *RIPE 23*. Furthermore, *RIPEcast* seeks to contribute to the three main areas of the research concern noted above, namely, Advancing Research and Innovation for Societal Impact, Promoting Research Excellence and Impactful Outcome, and Fostering Innovation and Driving Enterprise Success through Research. In this way, *RIPEcast* casts an inward eye to relevant and related activities within DBS while also seeking to establish new networks and partnerships which will further contribute to the three research concerns of *RIPE 23*.

⁴ SLATE2 as included in the *Institutional Profile*.

⁵ *RIPE 23* as included in the *Institutional Profile*.

DBS recognises that its research activity is undertaken within a national context. That context manifests itself in two ways: in the national research priorities the State has identified and in the quality framework for research required at undergraduate and postgraduate level. The latter is an integral part of the College's ambition to grow and develop RIPE. DBS is building its research capacity around already established high levels of quality teaching and learning in areas such as data analytics, information science, finance, psychology and psychotherapy;⁶ our staff members build quality coursework through consistent research in their respective disciplines. This reflects in the quality of the programmes, and we hope to see it developed into further research outputs across the College.

DBS, in support of its strategic ambition to attain Delegated Authority from QQI to make awards, intends to develop its research activity, leading to more postgraduate awards (including adding MScs in Cybersecurity and Service Chain Management, among others). DBS recognises the significant responsibilities attached to this ambition, both within the College in respect of capacity and through its responsibilities in respect of the QA framework and more generally in the State. DBS intends to develop policy in respect of postgraduate accredited research to accompany this research strategy.

Resources and Avenues for Research

DBS seeks to disseminate impactful practice research outputs through the office of the Practice Research Coordinator (PRC), Practical Applied Research Conference (PARC), Research Librarian and the *DBS Applied Research and Theory Journal*. The PRC has been in place since January 2021. This role tracks and supports research across all disciplines and answers to the Applied Research and Practice Committee and the Academic Dean. The role has grown every year and will continue to develop. PARC 22 and PARC 23 were major international hybrid conferences. The College will continue to grow and develop this conference. The Library works closely with the PRC to add specific support for research-active staff. A dedicated Research Librarian continues to work with the PRC while the Head of the Library and management staff also liaise closely with the PRC. The in-house peer-reviewed journal the *DBS Business Review* has recently been relaunched as the *DBS Applied Research and Theory Journal*, and a new Editor-in-Chief, Dr Rita Day, was appointed in July 2023. The journal represents the wider applied research concerns of PARC and the College in general. A new board and editorial team have refreshed the successful journal, and it will continue to grow as a significant research output for the College and wider researchers.

DBS continues to deliver research-led teaching and learning and delivers its teaching through multiple modes, including classroom, online and blended learning. Its delivery will be characterised by innovation that will provide flexibility appropriate to the profile of the student and enhance the student experience and academic outcomes. These endeavours explicitly seek to assure that research and innovation underlie our teaching and learning and deliver robust evidence-based support to the same. To achieve this, we will use different tools and technology based on best practice, student feedback and data analytics. Moodle will be at the centre of all our provision and will grow to allow for additional tools, plug-ins, gamification, progression and retention mechanisms for students while supporting the DBS pedagogical approach to teaching and learning. Our physical teaching spaces will be modern and conducive to group work, discussion and collaborative learning. Our teaching methodologies and resources will actively engage students, incorporate time and space for reflective learning and have links to the wider world of industry and employers. Innovation in the realm of teaching and learning will be supported by action research as different tools, technologies and pedagogy are explored. Placing the learner at the heart of all that we do will ensure that their narrative forms part of studies done on their experience of technology,

⁶ For example, this research area sits firmly within the Statement of Priorities: Health and Social Care Research 2023–2025 research priority areas for 2023 to 2025 (Department of Health, 2023).

engagement, self-regulation and collegiality. Academic quality is at the heart of all education in DBS – not least our research, innovation and enterprise – and ensuring that this reflects sound contemporary practices based on solid evidence-based approaches will guarantee our success.

In recent years, the College has invested in supports to assist faculty in their research endeavours:

- Allocation of funds to faculty via the Applied Research and Practice Committee, including the allocation of several research scholarships which provide faculty with the equivalent of 37.5 paid teaching hours to conduct research. To date, over 100 scholarships have been awarded to faculty across all subject-group areas. The output of this research has informed teaching and learning, subject-specific knowledge and the development of new programmes. There is also a fund of €5,000 per annum for conference attendance.
- Setting up of a Register of Scholarly Activity which records the research output of DBS faculty throughout their academic careers. We have developed a comprehensive register that shows consistent improvement of research outputs year-on-year.
- The establishment of an open-access institutional repository [eSource](#) to showcase the scholarly output of faculty and students at DBS. This has recently been expanded and improved upon by a new Library initiative.
- Appointment of a dedicated PRC to encourage and facilitate research across the College (discussed above).
- Provision of individual consultancy with faculty by the Research Librarian, as well as a programme of classes on getting published in academic literature, measuring citation impact and other topics. The Research Librarian also organises guest lectures of research interest. This role has undergone consistent expansion and has developed a solid working relationship with the PRC.
- Provision of an active publication avenue for staff via the *DBS Applied Research and Theory Journal*, which also enables international recognition for the College. The journal seeks to highlight scholarship across the College and has recently changed its scope to represent the wider practice research utilised across DBS. The new title came from the desire to have the name of the journal reflect its new scope, which aims to reach an international community for a diversity of research backgrounds publishing on the practice and application of research and theory in their fields. *DBS Applied Research and Theory Journal* is indexed with the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), EBSCO and Proquest. The journal is a cross-institutional, international endeavour which features a range of academic contributors, including students and faculty. The journal accepts a variety of content ranging from peer-reviewed journal articles, opinion pieces and case studies to book reviews and conference reports. Editorial and Advisory Board members include academics, librarians and practitioners from institutions in Ireland and internationally.
- Inauguration of the PARC in 2022. This was an international conference that allowed DBS staff to share their research with a wider audience. The conference was held again in 2023 and we now plan to continue it as a yearly event. This event built upon the annual Research Day, which was an in-house event for staff and Research Grant holders. With this wider reach and embracing of hybrid delivery, we have grown this event into a major multinational conference.
- Collaboration in Research Grant applications. DBS was successful in 2017 in a collaborative grant application under Erasmus+. This was done in conjunction with Paris Business School and the University of Bremen, Germany. In May 2023, DBS was awarded four staff mobilities through the Erasmus+ Programme (KA131). We are in the process of establishing inter-institutional agreements to initiate teaching exchanges with our partner institutions. DBS will endeavour to continue to form collaborations which can allow for similar applications to be made.

Evaluation

Research at DBS helps to focus programmes that will produce work-ready graduates with attributes that are highly attractive to employers, resulting in high graduate employment outcomes. It is the intent that all the programmes delivered by DBS have been created with this purpose and have had employers heavily engaged in their construction. Delivery of programmes should also include work placement, where appropriate, and career planning and support for students is integral to the DBS experience, with a significant practical involvement by employers. In an ever-changing marketplace, employers understand and require the need to iterate and ideate. The College's employer focus will support growth through collaborations on applied research and research in emerging areas of practice and industry. At present, there are five industry boards across the main academic areas in the College: Finance, Marketing, Business, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Arts. The Boards are chaired by an independent industry expert and consist of the Academic Director, DBS Careers Coaches, and industry and academic experts. These meet on a quarterly basis and ensure that all programmes are innovative and relevant and meet industry needs.

Conclusion

DBS will continue to grow its research expertise across all disciplines in order to increase research under our three pillars of concern: Research for societal good, research-led teaching and learning, and industry- and enterprise-focused research. We intend to monitor and fulfil the promises of our *RIPE 23* strategy as well as the overall drive of the College to continue to be a research-led and research-informed institution.

Areas for Improvement

1. Increase recorded research outputs.
2. Garner external funding for research projects across the College.
3. Expand research outreach both internally and externally, using the Practical Applied Research Conference as a vehicle to enable additional collaboration with Irish and international partners.

Chapter 2: Teaching and Learning

In evaluating teaching and learning in DBS, it is useful to reflect on the changing context over recent years. In the fourth quarter of 2018, DBS had commenced on a path to implement the strategic objectives of its new Strategy for Learning, Assessment and Teaching Enhancement (SLATE). The view was that over a 5-year period the model of teaching and learning would evolve in a phased process from solely physical on-campus delivery complemented by resources in the learning management system (LMS) Moodle towards a more flexible learning, teaching and assessment model with a mix of online and hybrid blended learning. This would involve investment in resources and training for all areas of delivery and pedagogy.

However, this 5-year plan was accelerated with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, prompting an unprecedented shift to remote and hybrid learning. This resulted in a rethink of teaching and learning pedagogies as lecturers embraced innovative approaches to engage learners in virtual and hybrid classrooms. This shift compelled DBS educators to adapt and innovate to ensure the continuity and quality of all elements that form part of the learner experience.

In the remainder of this section, before getting into the specifics of the learning environment, assessment and supports for students, we will discuss strategy and structures that support teaching and learning at DBS.



Strategy

Description

As set out in the *Institutional Profile* document, DBS has a formal Strategy for Learning, Assessment and Teaching Enhancement (SLATE). The strategy was reviewed and completely updated in 2023 and will be formally launched as SLATE2 in the second quarter of 2024. The three goals of SLATE2 underpin all approaches to teaching and learning in the College and provide a focus for programme development and delivery, linked to and supported by industry engagement to ensure graduates are work-ready. SLATE2 has an associated Action Plan which sets out its goals and objectives, with actions under each objective, detailed tasks, outcomes, mechanisms to measure, deadlines and roles responsible for ensuring the actions are met. The Action Plan is a live document, to be reviewed and updated quarterly. A copy of the Action Plan is provided in Appendix 8, and an extract is given in Table 4 to demonstrate the detail under each area.

Table 4 Extract from SLATE Action Plan

Objective: Improve the quality, currency and accessibility of teaching content				
Actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all teaching content and delivery is in line with principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) • Equip faculty through continuous professional development (CPD) with an understanding of how to maintain a learning experience that meets DBS-defined quality standards for teaching • Devise and implement tools for assessing the quality of teaching delivery 				
Tasks	Outcome	Measure	Deadline	Owner
Engage all faculty in the module pathway	Faculty are aware of UDL principles	Faculty Managers record all faculty have engaged with the module pathway	Jan 2025	LU/FMs
Review module content against UDL principles	All teaching content approved against UDL principles	State of content's compliance with UDL principles are reported in programme reports	Dec 2025	ADs/ HoD/ LU
Create a 'Using the Library Resources' course for faculty	Faculty able to effectively share existing Library resources via Moodle	Number of faculty interactions with Library resources increases by over 50%	Dec 2024	LU/ Library

Objective: Challenge learners to think critically and engage in discussions and debates with their peers and other relevant stakeholders				
Actions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish appropriate student-to-teacher ratios for types of learning to allow for more personalised attention and feedback • Actively manage learner expectations on the challenges and the engagement required to meet those challenges 				
Tasks	Outcome	Measure	Deadline	Owner
Review induction content and delivery to emphasise expectations of learner engagement	Learners are more aware of the value of engagement and critical thinking	Stats on learner engagement with Learning@DBS OnDemand content	Sept 2024	LU/ SESU
Prioritise critical thinking and engagement in learner support	Learners become more aware of the importance to learning of engagement and critical thinking	Stats on learner engagement with supports promoting engagement and critical thinking	June 2024	ASC

Note: LU=Learning Unit, FM=Faculty Manager, AD=Academic Director, HoD=Head of Department, SESU=Student Engagement and Success Unit, ASC=Academic Support Community

Additionally, and aligned with the institution-level SLATE, a teaching and learning strategy document is created as part of the development of every programme. This document sets out the teaching, learning and assessment principles for the programme as aligned with the Minimum Intended Programme Learning Outcomes (MIPLOs).

Evaluation

The Action Plan for SLATE2 will be a crucial instrument for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning for the College and ensuring continuous improvements, with clear accountability for each task and action. The plan will be a standing agenda item on the Learning and Teaching Committee agenda, with required reporting to the Senior Leadership Team, Academic Board and Board of Directors. As can be seen from the examples above, under each identified action the associated tasks speak to a range of areas. Some, such as engaging faculty with the Module Pathway (i.e. training), and the task relating to review of induction content, refer to things which are already in place but which need to be more widely embedded, while others such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL) will require the initiation of a whole-College project.

It should be recognised that inclusion of specific tasks and actions in the plan does not mean that there is not already good practice associated with some of these areas taking place within the College. Rather, it aims to capture the need to ensure that good practice is formalised, tracked and continually developed and enhanced. There is a recognition, in both the Strategy and Plan, that the external environment has evolved and continues to evolve rapidly, and the College will need to respond to this in the lifetime of the Strategy. The Action Plan aims to set out realistic time scales to address each area.

The programme-level strategy documents serve to ensure that teaching approaches and assessment practices are explicitly considered against the MIPLOs, and that the programme strategy is linked back to the institutional strategy. As it stands, however, it is a descriptive document. As this document has now been in existence since 2019 in an unchanged format, it would benefit from being reviewed and refreshed.

Conclusion

The updated Strategy for Learning, Assessment and Teaching Enhancement (SLATE2) builds on the College's previous strategy and has not yet been formally launched, although it has been approved. The Action Plan for implementation of the Strategy sets out tasks up to 2026 and provides a formal mechanism for monitoring the range and breadth of teaching and learning enhancements at a whole-College level.

Areas for Improvement

1. The SLATE2 Action Plan should be reviewed on a regular schedule, with reporting on milestones as they are achieved. The Action Plan should be updated as necessary over its lifetime to ensure it remains current and responsive.
2. Programme-level teaching and learning strategies should be reviewed and refreshed in light of SLATE2 and the Action Plan to ensure continued alignment.

Structures

Description – Academic Management

Over recent years the College has reviewed and sought to strengthen the academic management structures to ensure that all aspects of teaching and learning are supported. The new academic management structure and team has emerged from the recommendations of the Academic Delivery Working Group (ADWG) (see Chapter 1); it is also aligned with the vision and mission of the College and SLATE/SLATE2. A summary of the responsibilities of the leadership roles at each discipline level is given below, with a broader explanation provided in Appendix 9.

- **Academic Directors** are responsible for the medium- to long-term academic management and development of the discipline. They set the standards for programme delivery and ensure that they are being met, with the involvement of the Assistant Academic Directors and Programme Level Managers. They report on the performance of the programme portfolio in their discipline.
- **Assistant Academic Directors** support the Academic Director in providing academic leadership in programme management, development and review, working closely with Programme Teams in the delivery of programmes to students. The role is focused on effective programme management and teaching, learning and assessment initiatives at discipline and programme level. The Assistant Academic Director role is a relatively new one that was put in place in 2022.
- **Programme Level Manager (PLM)** is a new role, introduced in 2023, that replaced a previous role of Subject Matter Expert (SME). The role of SME was specific to a subject area or discipline and needed to include a student-facing element. The PLM role is now very student focused, involving responsibility for the day-to-day academic management of assigned programmes.

Within each discipline area, appointments have been made based on student numbers and specific requirements of the subject areas. Figure 7 shows the current academic management structure.

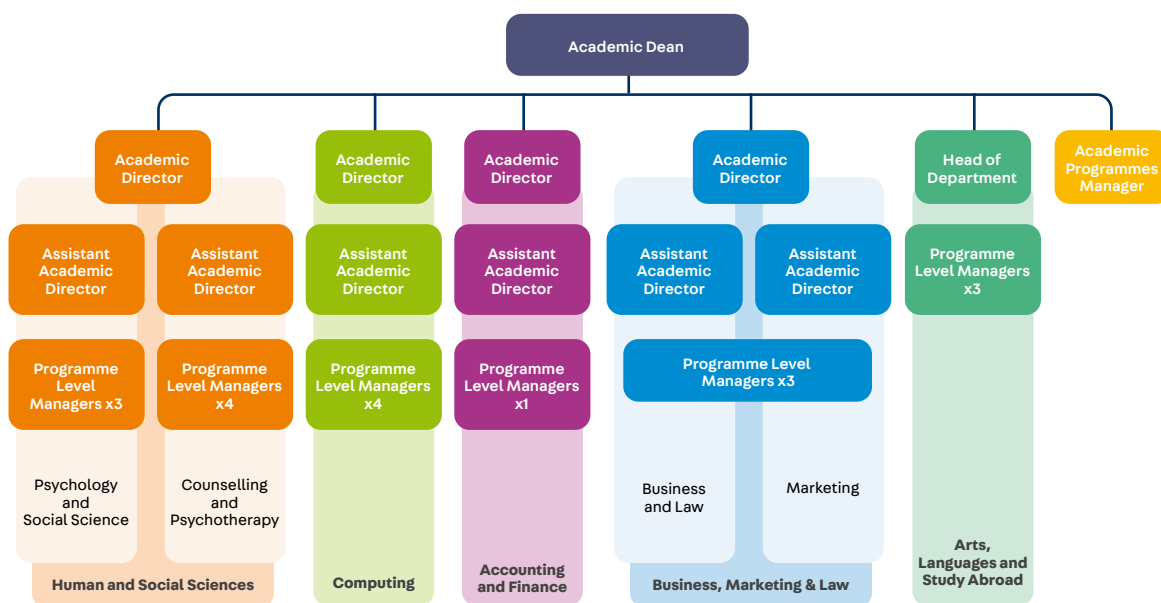


Figure 7 Academic management structure at DBS

- **Work Placement Coordinator:** This role was put in place in the areas of Business, Marketing and Law, Accounting and Finance, and Psychology to manage the process for new elective placement options introduced on some Masters-level programmes. The role was created in recognition of the need to ensure that placements are appropriate and that the experience is fully aligned to the programme learning outcomes. The role liaises with the placement provider and supports the student before and during placement.
- **Learner Retention Officers** were introduced in 2023. An additional 0.5 whole time equivalent role was created and the Student Support Officer roles and responsibilities updated. There is now a full-time Senior Student Support and Retention Officer role and a part-time Student Support and Retention Officer.

Description – Learning Unit

The Learning Unit (LU, previously the EdTech Team), supports academic management and has been instrumental in supporting the evolution of teaching and learning for the College. It provides support and training mainly to the lecturing faculty, but also to other members of the learner support staff, such as the Exams Office, Library and Academic Hub, Content Development Team, IT Service Desk and Academic Operations. The LU is a small team, and its mission is to promote a culture of excellence, innovation and collaboration in teaching and learning.

Much of the work of the LU is captured in the sections on the Learning Environment and Faculty and Staff Support below.

Evaluation

The roles and departments set out above represent a redefining of the academic structures of DBS to ensure cohesive supports for programme development and delivery and the teaching and learning activities of the College. It is recognised that with the changing profile of learners, as well as changes in the external environment, the needs and expectations of learners have evolved. Increasing numbers of full-time international postgraduate students have very different requirements to the typical profile of part-time evening learners. The PLM role has been introduced to ensure that there is close oversight of programme delivery. As the role is a relatively new one, with appointments made over the course of 2023, its impact is probably not yet fully visible.

The ADWG continues to meet regularly to discuss the structures in place and what is working or may need to be adjusted. It is recognised that the PLM role was introduced facing into a particularly busy period for the College, with a large volume of programmes in all discipline areas due for Programme Review and Revalidation in the period 2023–2025. As such, Academic Directors and Assistant Academic Directors have an increased workload, so the benefits of the additional roles may not yet be fully felt.

As of March 2024, a business case is being developed for recruitment of a third Assistant Academic Director under Business, Marketing and Law due to the volume of programmes and students in this area.

A development since the creation and staffing of the above roles is that it has been identified that the structures that currently sit under the Academic Director for Human and Social Sciences are not sufficient to address the range of disciplines in this area. Currently, the Human and Social Sciences discipline covers all programmes in psychology, addiction studies, social science, social care, counselling and psychotherapy, and psychoanalysis. Due to the distinct and specialised nature of these programmes, involving the stringent and complex requirements of associated professional bodies, it has been agreed to divide the discipline and recruit another Academic Director to oversee the counselling and psychotherapy and psychoanalysis-facing programmes. As part of the process of redefining this area, consideration is also being given to the introduction of other roles to support specific aspects of the programmes, such as ensuring requirements for experiential elements and practice are fulfilled.

Conclusion

Additional academic management roles have been put in place to ensure that the learning experience is well designed and that effectiveness is monitored at a programme level. Roles and responsibilities are kept under review. The needs of the College have changed over time, and the creation of the Academic Delivery Working Group recognises the importance of keeping staffing under review to ensure appropriate supports are in place to enable learner success. The College has specific structures in place and aims for consistency across the discipline areas to ensure that roles and responsibilities are well defined and understood, with clear accountability. At the same time, it is recognised that there are specific academic and professional-facing requirements in different disciplines which also need to be accounted for and responded to.

Areas for Improvement

1. Continue to keep academic staffing requirements, specifically with respect to academic management, under review.

Learning Environment

Description

The DBS learning environment is a diverse ecosystem of physical, virtual and social structures designed to provide both learning opportunities and achievement of defined learning outcomes. The DBS learning environments is interactive: learners interact with other learners, faculty and support staff, with content and activities within and beyond defined spaces. The DBS ethos provides a learning environment that seeks equity, inclusion and recognition of learner diversity.

As noted above, the period since 2019 has seen considerable changes in the approaches to teaching and learning and associated technologies. DBS has transitioned from 100% on-campus delivery, albeit supported by resources in Moodle, to truly blended delivery comprising:

- On-site classroom delivery
- Online synchronous delivery
- Hyflex delivery with learners both in the classroom and online
- Online asynchronous delivery.

DBS was approved for Blended Delivery by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) in 2019, so a strategic move towards more flexible delivery was underway prior to COVID-19; however, the pandemic accelerated these plans. At the time of writing in early 2024, the multimodal delivery by DBS is dependent on the learner groups and needs. As such, DBS has invested in a comprehensive development of all learning spaces that facilitate and enhance the learning environment. Table 5 compares the approaches to delivery in 2019 and 2024, demonstrating how significant the developments have been within a relatively short period of time.

Table 5 Evolution of teaching and learning from 2019 to 2024

	Learning Space	Technologies	Course Material	Mode	Pedagogy	Assessment/Exams	Community Support and Training
2019	On Campus: Physical classroom Physical library	Moodle Overhead projector Desktop PC MS Office Citrix Panopto	Printed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Notes, quizzes, slide decks, guides, books, articles, etc. ● Limited multimedia ● Limited class recordings 	Blended	Mainly traditional didactic lecture	Assessment: Paper-based quizzes, Paper-based posters Digital assignments: Essays, reports, slides, theses, etc. Exams: Proctored physical	IT services EdTech New staff faculty mentor Moodle workshops Moodle Training Page guides/How To Videos
2024	Local: Smart classrooms Remote: Virtual classrooms Open-breakout spaces Teaching Pods Online library	Moodle Zoom Interactive touchscreen boards Multiple TV screens Enhanced audio and video Automated class recordings Office 365 Apps Citrix Vevox	Multimedia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Online polls, surveys, online quizzes, ● collaborative learning ● forums ● On-demand (asynchronous) lessons ● eBooks/journals/database ● Glossaries ● All class recordings 	Blended Hybrid/hyflex Fully online On-demand	Didactic lecture Active learning Flipped classroom	Assessment: Quizzes Recorded video presentations Digital assignments: Essays, reports, slides, theses, etc. E-portfolios Authentic assessment Digital artefacts/posters, etc. Exams: Proctored online Interactive Oral Assessment	Staff intranet: Resources, blogs, videos, guides. Ask Me Anything (AMA) Classroom competence training LU New Faculty Pathway Quality standards Module Pathway Badge CPD OnDemand lessons Curriculum development sessions ABC Workshops Advance HE fellowships

Classroom Technologies

There are 48 classrooms in three buildings on the DBS campus, now all configured with the highest-quality information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure, including high-speed broadband, wireless networks and cloud-based storage. As of the first quarter of 2024, all classrooms are configured as 'Zoom Rooms' which offer the opportunity for an enhanced hybrid learning environment, where the lecturer can deliver simultaneously to learners in the classroom and online. The system involves having a large widescreen TV, either on a wall or suspended from the ceiling, in front of the lecturer for displaying the online learners. A sound bar with an in-built tracking camera is underneath the TV. The sound bar has a powerful microphone/speaker that projects the sounds of the online learners throughout the class. The camera, which can track the lecturers as they move, has a sufficiently wide range for a view of the room.

Informal peer and individual study is supported in breakout areas located in the Library and interspersed throughout the campus buildings.

All faculty are provided with dedicated, full Zoom licences. The majority of classes are recorded, and class recordings are available on Moodle.

Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL)

Moodle and Zoom provide the core online platforms for supporting learning in all modes of delivery. In addition, learning is enhanced by a wide range of technologies (see Figure 8). The adoption of technology is driven by examining the pedagogical needs of the learners and how technology can be used to meet them.



Figure 8 DBS technology chart

Library and Academic Hub

The [Library and Academic Hub](#) is open for students 6 days a week, Monday to Thursday 9am–10pm, Friday 9am–9pm and Saturday 9am–5pm. The librarians are available to answer questions in person, over the phone, through email and on Live Chat. The Information Literacy and Research Department (IL&R) team, alongside academic writing lectures, facilitate the Postgraduate Academic Writing Skills (PAWS) module each term. The IL&R team teaches the PAWS module every term for 2 weeks on the topics of referencing, plagiarism and finding academic resources that are provided by the Library and Academic Hub.

Other workshops provided include:

- Advanced Research for Business Students
- Assignment Planning in Six Steps
- Critically Thinking for Academic Success
- How Is My Essay Marked?
- How to Reference and Avoid Plagiarism
- Preparing for a Literature Review
- Preparing for an Online Exam
- Presentation Skills
- Understanding Zotero.

As described in Chapter 1, the Library Team is also pivotal in supporting research for the College. One of the key achievements has been the Library's commitment to expanding its digital resources, particularly through the acquisition of eBooks. As a result of targeted efforts, the Library now has access to nearly 57% of reading list titles in eBook format, with plans to further increase this figure.

The Library has also utilised technology effectively to improve the learning experience for students, such as improvements to our Library Live Chat for quick and comprehensive assistance. In addition, work is ongoing to evolve Library services, including a website overhaul and the publication of new guides aimed at assisting students with their assignments and research.

Evaluation

As can be seen from the above, the learning environment in DBS is extremely rich and diverse. While delivery mechanisms (i.e. in class versus online) are a key element of the programme design process, it is the case that DBS, like the rest of the sector, is still operating under derogations from QQI put in place through the COVID-19 pandemic, and then more recently pending alignment with the newly published QQI *Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended and Fully Online Programmes* (2024). This flexibility was sought in part by the sector to accommodate cohorts who commenced their programmes during COVID-19, but also arising from learners' understandable increased expectation of flexibility in delivery. DBS is currently reviewing its quality assurance (QA) policies and procedures in this context and with a view to applying to QQI for approval to deliver fully online programmes and attaining reapproval for delivery of existing validated programmes aligned with current practice under the derogations. As such, notwithstanding all the excellent work that has been done, there is an ongoing piece of work to take stock and define approaches to delivery across all DBS offerings.

Feedback from stakeholders on the teaching and learning experience is gathered through a number of channels. The formal mechanisms of gathering student feedback are discussed in Chapter 3, but feedback is provided through a wide range of avenues, including:

- Learning and Teaching Committee
- Faculty Manager Requests
- Email queries to Learning Unit
- IT Service Desk tickets
- Programme Team meetings
- Online information and support sessions – RESq and Ask Me Anything (AMA)
- Online workshops
- Instant messaging
- Faculty Surveys (sample of results below)
- Student Surveys
- Student Council meetings.

Feedback from faculty has also been gathered through a survey of their experience. It indicates a positive response to the overall experience of teaching in DBS, as Figure 9 shows.

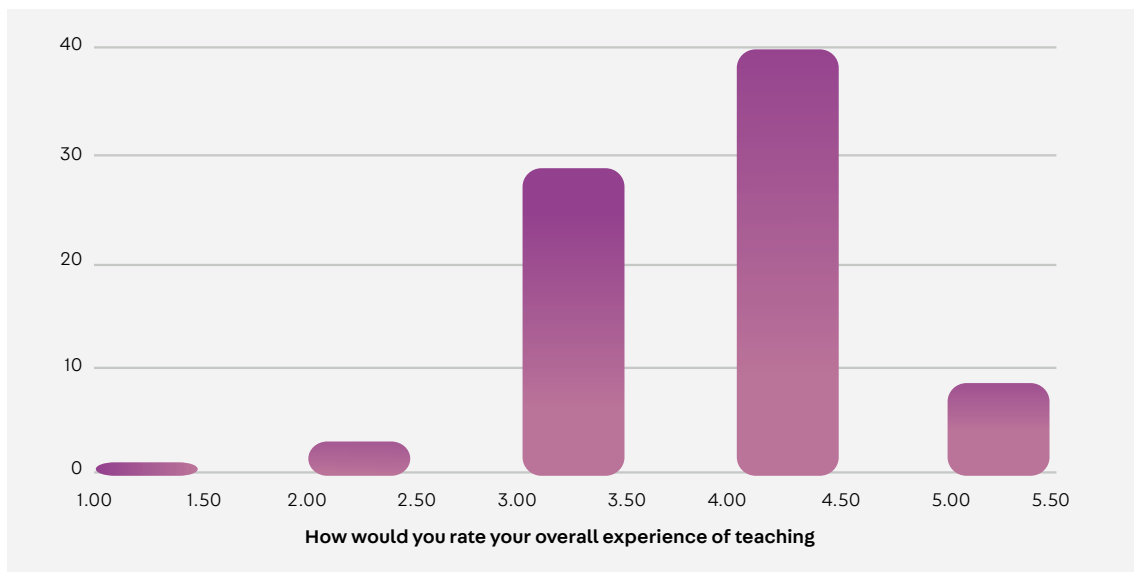


Figure 9 Rating by faculty of their teaching experience at DBS

Regarding Moodle, the survey illustrated a positive experience rating of over 58%, though 33.3% indicated being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Figure 10 summarises the findings. More detail on feedback is in Appendix 10.

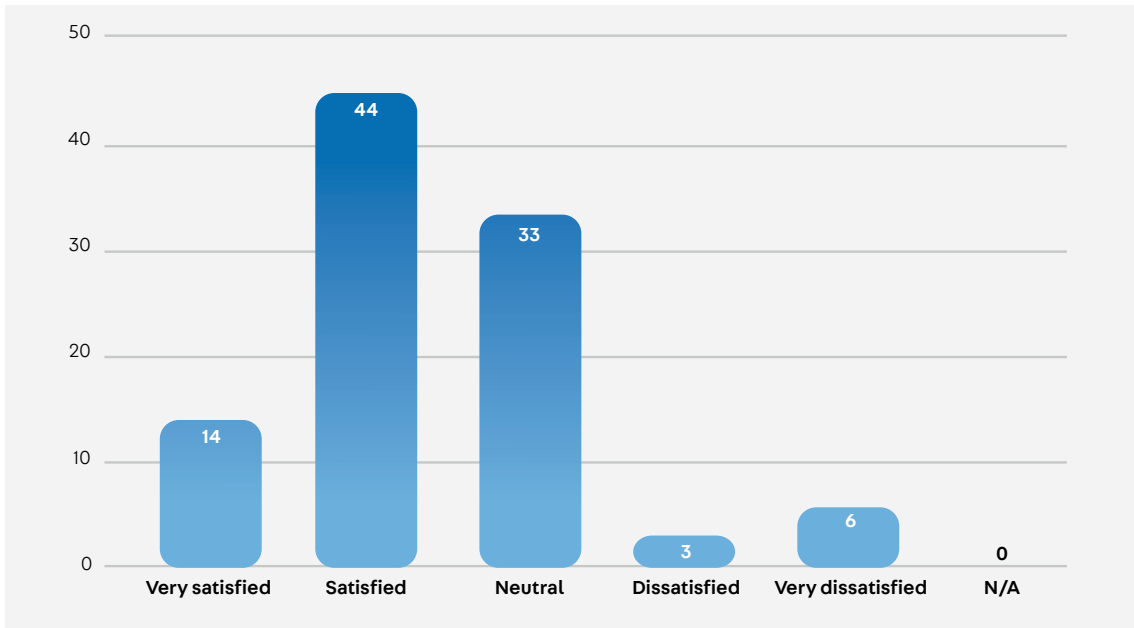


Figure 10 Lecturer satisfaction with Moodle for teaching and learning (%)

Faculty were asked to identify their positive and negative experiences of working with classroom technology. The responses were very rich, identifying good experiences and areas for improvement. On the positive side, lecturers were complimentary of the dedicated Zoom accounts, class recordings and the provision of soundproof pods. On the negative side, lecturers felt there were sometimes disruptions caused in class by the technology, a poorer experience for hyflex teaching and some navigational issues on Moodle.

Conclusion

DBS continues to invest in the learning environments associated with provision of curriculum and learning environment in line with the Strategy Statements in the updated Strategy for Learning and Teaching Enhancement (SLATE2) and the associated Action Plan 2023-2024. Students and faculty have attested to the high quality of their respective learning and working environments via feedback channels and surveys. Much investment of resources and effort has gone into supporting all learners and faculty learning and working, both on campus and online. As noted above, however, DBS is now entering another phase of transition to ensure compliance with QQI’s *Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended and Fully Online Programmes*, as well as ensuring the strategy for delivery at a programme level is robust and consistent with the needs of our learners and the academic and professional requirements of each programme. Learners increasingly require more flexibility in delivery, and this has to be balanced with the optimum pedagogical approaches.

Areas for Improvement

1. Complete the process of applying to QQI for quality assurance approval for delivery of online programmes.
2. Engage with QQI in aligning all programme validations with desired modes of delivery.
3. Align each programme delivery and teaching and learning strategy with SLATE2 as part of the above processes.

Asynchronous Content Production

Description

The production of asynchronous learning content is guided by the teaching and learning strategies of our multimodal programmes. Within the mix of modes, asynchronous content is typically deployed to explain theory and concepts that contextualise the practical aspects of the learning outcomes.

We have a dedicated Content Development Team that works closely with the relevant Academic Director and faculty members at the design stage of programme development. This team comprises:

- Three Instructional Designers
- Content QA Editor
- Two Junior Content Editors
- Learning Content Designer
- Junior Content Developer
- Audio-visual (AV) Technician
- Project Manager.

The development of asynchronous lessons for each module starts with a Curriculum Planning Meeting that is attended by:

- A faculty member who is responsible for writing the manuscripts (referred to internally as 'scripts') that guide students through the course material in a manner akin to a bespoke textbook for the module; these faculty members are either someone teaching on the module or someone who has relevant subject matter expertise
- One or two members of the LU
- Project Manager for the Content Development Team
- Content QA Editor and/or a Junior Content Editor.

Among other things, this meeting helps to identify and set out the topics for each lesson, as designated by the Academic Director, as well as the deadlines for script delivery as decided by the Project Manager.

When scripts are submitted for development, they are subject to a rigorous review process by the Content QA Editor and Junior Content Editors to ensure:

- Adherence to internal standards as set out in the *OnDemand Manuscript Style Guide* (please see Document ISER 23 in the associated confidential information folder).
- Suitability for the aims and National Framework of Qualifications level of the module.

The editors are also responsible for coaching the scriptwriters on the principles of asynchronous learning content development and our internal standards through workshops and the *Scriptwriter's Handbook*. That document is available in Document ISER 22 in the associated confidential information folder.

Once the manuscript has been reviewed, it is given to the Project Manager, who assigns lesson development to an Instructional Designer, the AV Technician and one of either the Learning Content Designer or the Junior Content Developer. The Instructional Designer storyboards the lesson, complete with graphics requests for the attention of the Learning Content Designer or Junior Content Developer and video requests for the attention of the AV Technician. The Instructional Designer then builds an interactive lesson using Articulate Rise360, an eLearning authoring software package.

Once development is complete, including media assets, the Project Manager hands each lesson to the Content QA Editor for a rigorous QA process prior to its release to students through Moodle. The details of the lesson are then recorded in the OnDemand Course Catalogue.

Evaluation

As mentioned above, our Instructional Designers develop asynchronous lessons in Articulate Rise360. This is a relatively intuitive software package as it is easy to create reusable lesson templates, and the interactive elements that can be deployed are simple in nature. This means that the team can be flexible in developing content at scale and pace.

However, this ease of use comes with the drawback that the software is limited in terms of what it can achieve. The reliance on templated interactions with limited customisation options means that we cannot develop interactions to meet all learning needs. For instance, there is no possibility to provide simulations of coding environments for data analytics lessons, nor to provide scenario-based interactions for the benefit of psychotherapy lessons. This is a weakness given that DBS supplies learning in response to demand for practice- and skill-based qualifications. We are restricted further in terms of the interactivity of the lessons by the fact that some elements of Articulate Rise360 are inaccessible to learners with certain needs, with no options available to work around these limitations.

The team has been able to consult the LU for advice on how to deploy different technologies to meet a diverse range of needs, and this will continue to play an important part in the development of our asynchronous learning content processes and standards as we seek to address this weakness. The team is well trained in the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), with the majority of team members holding a Digital Badge in UDL from [AHEAD](#) (an independent organisation prompting inclusive education). As such, our processes and resources are well placed to ensure that our asynchronous content is compliant with UDL principles, and that the objectives of the Content Development Team are aligned with the Strategy and Plan of the SLATE2 document, particularly in terms of the objective to make teaching and learning UDL compliant throughout the College.

Evaluation is a key component of learning design. However, our current mechanisms for obtaining feedback on the deployment and reception of asynchronous content are informal. As such, we have gathered limited feedback from stakeholders to date and have not been able to formally utilise this feedback for the betterment of the development process. Discussions within the Content Development Team on how to formalise feedback from key stakeholders, especially lecturers and students, is ongoing. DBS has many formal procedures for student feedback, and these should be leveraged to garner specific feedback on the deployment of asynchronous content in multimodal programmes.

DBS continues to operate under special derogations from QQI introduced as a result of COVID-19. Relatedly, and following the recent publication by QQI of the *Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended and Fully Online Programmes (2024)*, we are reviewing our QA policies and procedures to ensure there is proper alignment. This review continues to be an important body of work to guarantee a defined delivery approach across all our offerings.

Conclusion

Our processes for asynchronous content production are both agile and robust, with an emphasis on quality throughout, and we are confident in the Content Development Team's ability to meet the volume of our development needs as relevant programmes pass validation and revalidation. A challenge faced by the team is how best to deliver an asynchronous learning experience that best suits the needs of a range of disciplines. Meeting this challenge will require foresight, planning and strong stakeholder engagement.

Given the breadth of asynchronous content already delivered, DBS must take stronger steps towards gathering formal feedback from key stakeholders and implementing insights gained elsewhere.

In the immediate future, our asynchronous development processes will be taking leads from our own SLATE2 strategy and QQI's recent guidelines on blended and fully online programmes, and we will leverage DBS resources to align the Content Development Team's objectives with those of the College.

Areas for Improvement

1. Evaluate and deploy new technologies that provide the best authoring environment relevant to the programme domain under development.
2. Improve the engagement across programme development and review teams with the Content Development Team to ensure all relevant stakeholder feedback is captured and shared.

Work-Integrated Learning

Description

A number of DBS programmes include experiential elements. In some cases, these relate to professional training and quotas of hours and contact as required by professional bodies. This includes supervised clinical practice, process group and client work on counselling and psychotherapy programmes, which have stringent professional body requirements for recognition under the bodies Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP) and Irish Association for Humanistic Integrative Psychotherapy (IAHIP). There is also a range of other programmes with work placements or experiential elements which are not professional body requirements. Currently, placement opportunities exist on 13 programmes, with more information set out in Appendix 12 showing the programme name, year of learning, mandatory or elective, credits and Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies.

The inclusion of work-integrated learning in programmes is seen as highly desirable and is linked to the DBS Strategic Objective to 'Create Work-Ready Graduates'. Ensuring the quality of the learning experience for learners engaged in work-integrated activities involves a combination of careful planning, monitoring and evaluation. Learners are informed about placement/experiential requirements or options upon application to the programme. In the case of placement or experiential requirements of professional bodies, this is clearly detailed on the website and in the *Learner Handbook*, and it is discussed with learners as part of the induction process.

For placements in the areas of business and computing, whether the placement is optional or mandatory, learners are given information about the placement at their induction, then again early in Semester 1. For elective placements, at the beginning of Semester 2 learners are invited to submit an Expression of Interest Form, and this triggers the process for the dedicated Placement Coordinator to commence that process with the relevant learners.

Information sessions take place for learners on the steps needed, such as creating a CV and other preparation, assessment of learning outcomes and the submission of work journals.

Clearly defined learning objectives and work-integrated activities are set out in a *Placement Handbook* to align academic goals with the immersive learning environment of a placement.

A placement can be secured in a number of ways, including the learner's own sources, the Industry Advisory Board, Careers Hub contacts, faculty recommendations and previous placement companies.

The Placement Coordinator communicates with the potential placement company to verify that the placement is fit for purpose for the learner, the programme and the company. Communication is maintained before and throughout the placement period with the line manager of the secured placement provider. This communication continues throughout the placement cycle at agreed intervals at the beginning, mid-point and towards the end of the cycle. As an additional security to ensure effective placement management, the placement company's line manager has direct access to the Placement Coordinator.

The types and requirements of placements in the area of Human and Social Sciences vary from programme to programme. These are included in Appendix 13.

Evaluation

The nature of work-based learning varies significantly for different programmes. In the area of counselling and psychotherapy, due to the requirements of professional bodies, the models and required supports are well established. Roles in this area have changed over the past couple of years with the intent of aligning with the rest of the College, but this is currently under further review to ensure that particular needs in this area continue to be fully met.

The research placement option at Level 9 in Psychology is a relatively new introduction. Uptake has been limited, as an elective alternative to the traditional dissertation capstone, but the initial learnings from these undertakings have already led to enhancements in the *Placement Handbook* and identification of additional clarity for placement-based supervisors for the scope of their role. The grievance escalation process has been made more explicit in the support guides for learners and supervisors, and the grading rubric has been reviewed to ensure consistent assessment across different supervision sites.

The computing programmes also have well-established placements. The placements on the Higher Diploma programmes have in some cases been too effective, such that learners who undertook the programme on an employment-initiation basis secure a place in their placement and subsequently choose not to complete the full programme and exit with the embedded Certificate award. While every effort is made to support learners in meeting the requirements of the final assessments to achieve the full award, some learners have disengaged once an employment opportunity was secured. The MSc in Library and Information Systems placement is designed as a requirement for completion of the programme but is not awarded a credit allocation on the basis that many learners are already based in a library workplace setting and can draw upon components of their existing roles to meet the assessment requirements of the placement component. The placement is associated with the Professional Development module, and the different requirements for learners already situated in a library setting as opposed to those who are not could be better presented in the internal programme schedule. This 'exemption' is clearly set out in programme information made available to applicants and learners.

In Business, the work placement model is relatively new, but having completed a number of successful placements, the process has been reviewed and feedback taken on board after each cycle. Placement companies complete a Placement Evaluation form for each learner. The feedback has been very positive and indicates that the learners are well prepared.

While the withdrawal of the Social Care programmes and cessation of work placements on these programmes was a challenging experience for both the College and learners, the learnings have been incorporated into institution-level strategies and procedures. The Focused Review initiated by QQI set out two recommendations regarding work placement, offering the College the opportunity to articulate and enhance the support and oversight mechanisms in place.

Monitoring of all placements and experiential elements is very important, as is ensuring submission requirements of all documentation and ongoing assessment from learners, as well as ongoing regular communication with the placement company/provider. If there are any issues identified either with a student or a placement, early intervention is required.

Conclusion

Experiential learning is an important component of learning. In some cases, as described above, it is a requirement for graduating learners to receive recognition by third parties. However, in all cases it is extremely beneficial to learners. Work placements do require specific and additional supports for learners. While this has been put in place, it is the College’s intention to grow work placement opportunities, and therefore these supports will need to be kept under review. Additionally, there is an increased role that the Industry Advisory Boards can play in shaping how work placement opportunities are utilised going forward.

Areas for Improvement

1. Continue to work with Industry Advisory Boards to ensure high-quality placement offerings in the College.
2. Include more placement options in programmes through the programme development process.
3. In the revision of the MSc in Information and Library Management programme, ensure the work placement component is appropriately reflected in the programme schedule.
4. For Higher Diploma learners selecting the placement elective, review the information provided before commencement to ensure full awareness and understanding of the value of completing the programme rather than exiting once a work opportunity has been secured.

Faculty and Staff Support and Training

Description

Training and supports for faculty are crucial in ensuring excellence in the classroom. As discussed in Chapter 1, all faculty are required to undertake the New Faculty Pathway and Module Pathway upon commencing with the College. Beyond these initial supports, however, there is a diverse array of courses, training, events, resources and support provided by the College, much of it developed or run through the LU. These are summarised in Appendix 11 and include training on classroom technologies, curriculum planning, academic compliance and resources available from outside DBS, such as from QQI, Advance HE and others.

New Faculty Pathway

The Pathway is for all new faculty coming to DBS, regardless of teaching or supervision experience in another institution. Following their appointment, the faculty member will receive onboarding details from Human Resources (HR), including an email address and access to the HR information system, Workday.

Before commencing teaching, they are then required to meet with Faculty Management, the Academic Director and the Learning Unit (LU), who provide information as follows:

Faculty Manager	Academic Director	Learning Unit	Other meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timetable • Probation form and meeting dates • Compliance training • Payment process • Lecturer absence policy • Staff card • Zoom account • Campus tour • Arrange meeting with Academic Director • In conjunction with the Academic Director nominate a mentor/ buddy • Arrange operation induction (Celcat, academic calendars) • Ensure inductions with other departments are arranged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Lecturer Handbook</i> • <i>QA Handbook</i> • Learner Code of Conduct • Programme Overview • Module Guide • Moodle pages • Preparing for a class • What to cover in first few classes • Learning-centred practice • Assessment strategy • Second marking • Rubrics • Information and reporting forums: Programme Team meetings/Programme Boards/Board of Studies • Student feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moodle • Zoom • Classroom tech • Content • Pedagogy • Multimodal TEL • Where to find support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT induction • Operations induction • Library induction

From the commencement of teaching, a series of check-in triggers are sent to the new starter, linking them with key stakeholders in the College to ensure any connections made during the pre-teaching onboarding are refreshed or renewed. These triggers are set out in Figure 11.

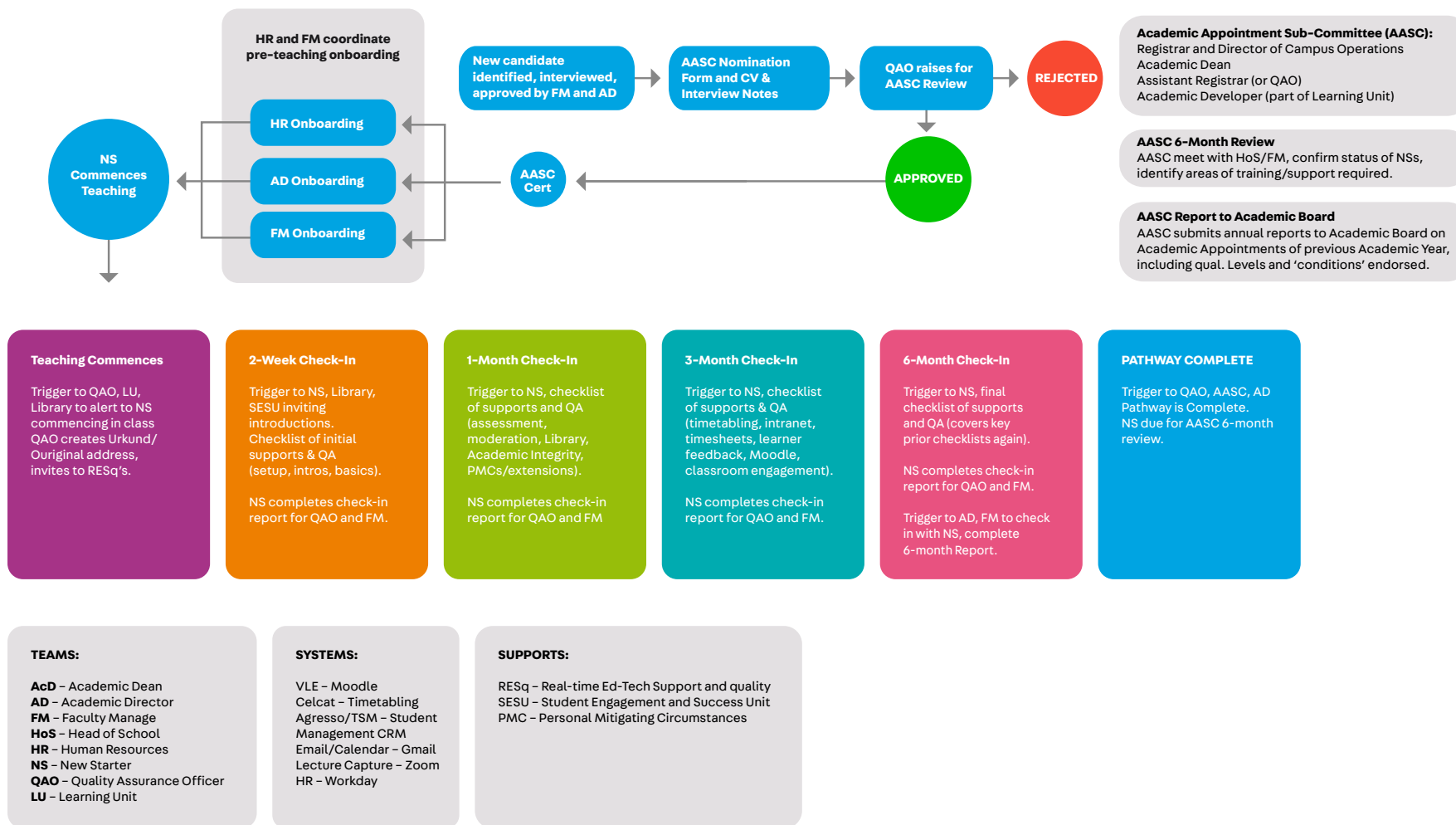


Figure 11 New Faculty Pathway check-in flowchart

The key milestones or touchpoints are:

- First day of teaching, with various introductions
- Two weeks into teaching, with introduction to the Research Librarian to focus on academic research
- One month into teaching, when the faculty member is given an opportunity to feed back on the supports in place thus far
- Three months into teaching with another opportunity to feed back
- Six months into teaching, to align with the completion of their probationary period.

These responses are captured centrally and digitally, offering an overview of new starters' experience and areas of low familiarity to allow targeted awareness-raising and training for teams and future new starters. Responses are raised to the Academic Appointment Sub-Committee and the Faculty Manager team for oversight and, where appropriate, action. While the triggers are automated, it is not mandatory that new starters complete the checklists and provide feedback.

Module Pathway

The Module Pathway is on-demand asynchronous content which has been especially created for DBS faculty. It comprises six online lessons as follows:

1. Lesson 1: Starting Off – Quality Standards and Pedagogical Approaches
2. Lesson 2: Analysis – The Module Learning Environment
3. Lesson 3: Design – The Module Learning Plan
4. Lesson 4: Development – Creating Content
5. Lesson 5: Implementation – Live Classroom Delivery
6. Lesson 6: Evaluation.

A reference version of this pathway is available [here](#).

To provide faculty with benchmarks to evaluate the learning experience, the LU developed a set of *Quality Standards* for teaching, learning and assessment in 2023. Based on evidence-based research, these five standards provide objective ways for faculty to evaluate all elements of the learning experience. These *Quality Standards* are covered in the Module Pathway to ensure that faculty are fully familiar with them. Other supports for lecturers, including a check of their classroom competencies, the 'Ask Me Anything' service from the LU and others are included in Appendix 11.

Evaluation

There is a wealth of support and resources available to staff, much of this achieved and driven through the work of the LU. The resources are a combination of compulsory elements and optional, formal and informal ones.

A faculty survey to assess the effectiveness of the onboarding training provided to our new faculty illustrates a positive response to the key objectives of the training programme related to teaching and learning. A sample of some results is shown in Table 6. Where a desire for more training is indicated by the surveys, this is followed up as required.

Table 6 Feedback from faculty on training received

	Yes	No
Have you used the lecturer online training guides available?	79.3%	20.7%
If you need support with technology or online training, do you know who to contact?	84.6%	15.4%
Have you been given training on accessing and on the basic steps of Moodle?	90.4%	9.6%

Engagement with some supports, such as the RESq drop-in sessions, remains limited, although those who do engage have reported the value in the support being available. The Registrar’s Office is commencing a second review of the advertising of the RESq sessions to improve uptake and engagement.

While the portion of the New Faculty Pathway from approved appointment to commencing teaching is mandatory, elements after that have limited uptake and engagement. The multiple trigger-points and the repetitive checklists have been reported as factors impacting engagement. The tailoring of the alerts and checks to particular faculty roles has been proposed given the diversity of roles, such as scriptwriters, ‘traditional’ lecturers, supervisors and practical skills trainers, where the standard checklists are not entirely relevant to their activities and may deter some new starters from engaging.

For some roles where their engagement with DBS systems is particularly limited and not traditionally academic, engagement with the supports and check-ins was noted to be limited. A new set of triggers was created for new faculty who only supervise postgraduate business capstone modules to reduce irrelevant questions and focus the check-ins to their needs. This recent innovation is in the early stages of implementation. Feedback from those who have completed the full process has largely been positive, but the limited uptake reduces the opportunity to draw out significant learnings from the process.

The following comments were also received from faculty:

- ‘Ideally, it would be advantageous to know exactly what students have and have not covered in prior modules that have a direct relationship with the current module.’
- ‘I felt well prepared for this new role.’
- When asked what the main obstacles were to engaging with the online staff Moodle online training page, many faculty indicated that they preferred ‘live interactive training to recorded content and pdf guides’.
- When asked ‘Which specific aspect could have enhanced your online teaching experience?’, the responses highlighted that faculty members expressed a need for additional preparation time, addressing learner expectations, and enhancing student engagement as crucial areas for improvement in online teaching and learning.
- On-campus teaching and learning were associated with the importance of having the appropriate physical space for teaching.
- Additionally, both online and on-campus scenarios indicated a desire for more training.

Additional results from a survey of faculty members who have successfully completed the Module Pathway demonstrate that the course significantly enhanced their capacity to enhance the learning experience for their students, with 100% of respondents saying the training helped them.

The surveys and other feedback mechanisms shaped the LU's strategies in developing lecturers' expertise through CPD activities, influencing the type, format and content that was presented to ensure faculty are successful in their role as educators.

Conclusion

The College has navigated the challenges of a rapidly changing external environment, new technologies and the changing profile of learners while exponentially increasing and improving its supports to faculty. Looking ahead, it is evident that the College is well positioned to continue its objective to 'Deliver Outstanding Learning' by developing and implementing 'teaching, learning and assessment strategies that continuously improve the delivery of teaching and the learning' (*DBS Academic Plan 2023-2024*, p. 29). However, a more systematic approach to assessing the outcomes of pedagogical changes, technological integrations, and support services will provide valuable insights into their efficacy in providing an effective learning experience. Improved measurement tools can contribute to a more data-driven decision-making process. Addressing this aspect will not only validate successful initiatives but also identify areas that require further refinement, ensuring a continuous cycle of improvement and responsiveness to the ever-changing landscape of higher education.

Areas for Improvement

1. Consider mechanisms to improve tracking of faculty engagement with training, supports and interventions.
2. Ensure outcomes of training and supports are followed up and the feedback loop is closed.
3. Continue to keep training needs under review and respond proactively, particularly with respect to emerging technologies.

Assessment of Learners

The assessment of learners is critical in any HEI in that it is the ultimate measure of the success of the quality assurance (QA) system. Assessing students should, on the face of it, be simple, but from principles to process there are many complexities that require focus and attention to detail.

Description

Assessment Strategy and Principles of Assessment

The goals set out in SLATE2 and the associated Action Plan are integral to the approach to assessment in DBS. The key objective to ‘Provide a variety of suitable assessment and feedback methods that are transparent, authentic and developmental’ arose from the Principles of Assessment set out in the *Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH)*. These Principles were reviewed and updated in 2021 in consultation with a Working Group of the (then) Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee. More detail can be found in the QAH, but the core tenets are that assessment should be:

- Integral
- Efficient
- Reliable
- Appropriate
- Fair
- Equitable
- Relevant
- Flexible
- Composite
- Complementary
- Integrated
- Work focused
- Objective
- Transparent
- Authentic
- Accessible
- Inclusive
- Supported
- Varied
- Regularly reviewed.

It is also recognised that for learner assessment to be effective, it should be a process that includes diagnostic, formative, summative and small-stakes assessment over a period of time. These definitions were set out in the *QAH*.

Diagnostic assessment assists in determining a learner’s preparedness for a programme, or a stage in a programme, and in identifying any possible learning needs. In itself, it does not normally attract a grade or contribute to an overall award. In some instances, it is used merely as a starting point and can inform or contribute to a formative or summative assessment task at a later stage. This would apply in the case of assessment for purposes of recognition of prior learning.

Summative assessments are for the purpose of determining a learner’s performance against specific learning outcomes. A mark is awarded in accordance with objective marking criteria, and this forms a part of learners’ formal learner record, which is reported to the Examination Board and will be ratified as part of their overall award and classification. Summative assessment is aligned to the concept of ‘assessment *OF* learning’.

Formative assessments are designed to give learners an opportunity to practise unfamiliar skills or demonstrate their understanding in a new area of learning and receive guidance on how to further improve. Formative assessments can be graded, as this is useful information for the learner regarding how well they are progressing or achieving, but those grades do not contribute to the overall summative result. Formative assessment is aligned to the concept of ‘assessment *FOR* learning’.

Low-stakes assessments are graded and collectively contribute, in a small part, to a learner's final grade. Low-stakes assessments tend to take place during class time and, as such, contribute to the learning. Low-stakes assessments are an opportunity to exercise 'assessment AS learning'.

The assessment strategy for a programme and modules therein, aligned with the above overarching principles, is set out as part of the Programme Validation process with respect to the assessment instruments to be used for each module, weightings and timing of assessment. For every programme, an assessment map is created to ensure a suitable distribution of assessments with regard to instrument type and timings and to prevent over-assessment of learners across the programme.

Information for Learners

Assessment schedules and requirements are set out in the *Learner Handbooks*. Every module for a programme has a corresponding page on Moodle, which includes an assessment block near the top of the page and which details the assessment and requirements, marking rubric, submission links and due dates. Lectures are expected to discuss the assessments with learners at the start of the module and then closer to the assessment deadlines.

To ensure that learners in all settings have a clear understanding of their assessment, the following guidelines have been established.

- **Clear and accessible information about assessments:** Learners should be made aware of the assessment strategy for the programme and module at the start of the learning journey, which begins at induction. A description of the assessments, accompanying marking scheme and deadlines should be posted on the Moodle page upon commencement of each module. The manner in which the assessments help learners achieve the module and programme learning outcomes should be articulated. The learner should have access to a map of the assessment deadlines and types across the programme at the start of each semester.
- **Assessment workload:** Dates of assessment submissions should be sufficiently dispersed so as ideally not to exceed two deadlines in the same seven-day period. The volume and number of assessments should be appropriate for the level of the programme and the credit weighting of the module. Each assessment should require the same learner effort as the other assessments on the programme.
- **Feedback:** Learners should receive timely feedback within the period specified for the type of assessment and the number of learners in the cohort. The volume and quality of the feedback should be in line with the assessment type.
- **Individual or group assessment:** Learners should be informed as part of the assessment description and alignment with learning outcomes as to the rationale for why an assessment is group or individual. This rationale should reference the module and programme learning outcomes.
- **Re-assessment parity with assessment strategy:** The re-assessment strategy will be detailed on the Moodle page as part of the assessment description and will be aligned to the assessment approach.

Assessment Process

Assessments, including both continuous assessment and examination papers, are prepared by lecturers in consultation with a moderator, in accordance with the module descriptor set out at validation. External QA of examination papers is managed centrally through the Exams Office (as described in Chapter 1), which sets deadlines for submission and manages coordination of making the papers available for review by the relevant External Examiners through a shared drive. Feedback on the papers from External Examiners is shared with the lecturer(s) and any changes made as required. The paper is issued to the External Examiner for review and comment. Comments received from the Examiner requiring changes to the exam paper are incorporated as appropriate, and the paper is then finalised.

Following the completion of an assessment, it is marked and moderated and marks are submitted via Moodle, which in turn pushes marks automatically into TSM, the student information system, for processing. A sample of marked continuous assessments and marked examination scripts is also required to be submitted to the Exams Office by lecturers for provision to the External Examiner. Once feedback has been received from the External Examiner, marks are agreed for each candidate. All grades and awards are subsequently verified at the Exam Board and ratified at the Academic Board. Once the official exam process has been completed, any learning that needs to be done from the exam cycle is disseminated in appropriate ways. An overview of the Exam Process is shown in Figure 12. The process for continuous assessments (CAs) is essentially the same with the exception that provision of draft CAs to External Examiners is not centrally managed or tracked. External Examiners are provided with samples as part of the larger Exam Pack if samples are provided by individual lecturers. External Examiners may also ask to see these.

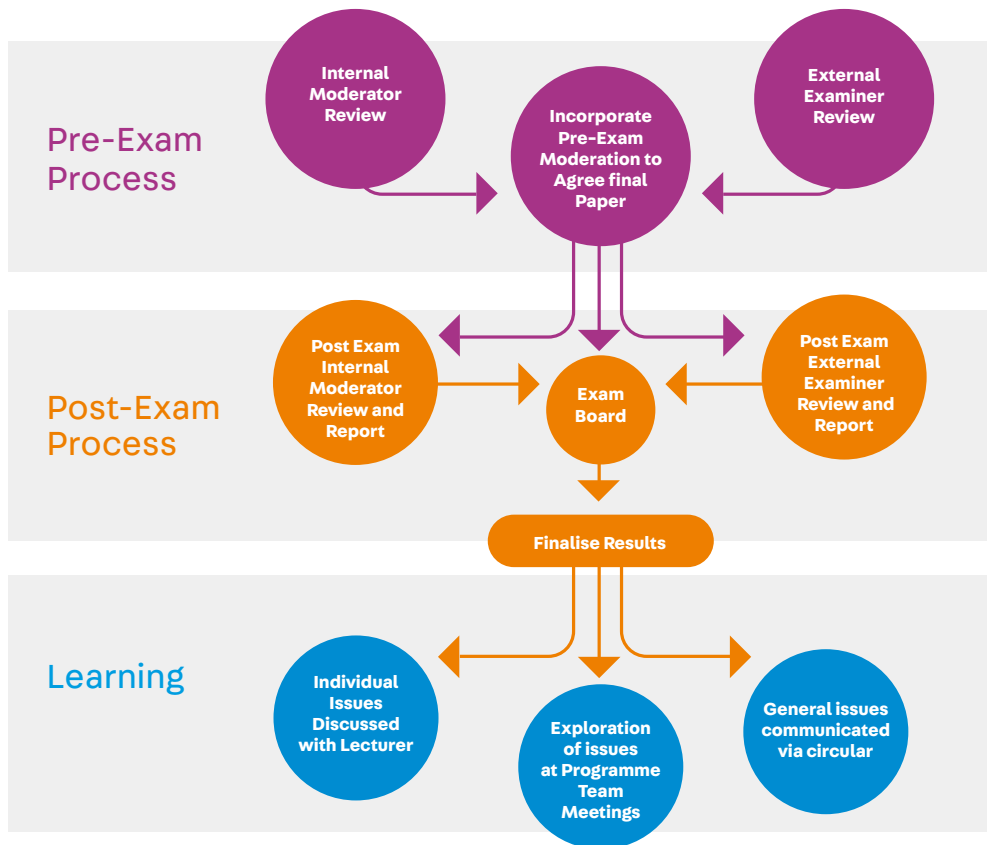


Figure 12 Exam process overview

Security of Assessments

All assessments are managed through the College’s secure systems. Each iteration of a module has its own Moodle page. All Moodle pages include lecturer contact details; a module descriptor; assessment brief comprising a description of the assessments, accompanying marking scheme and deadlines; lecture notes; lecture recordings; CA submission links and links to the online examination platform, Mercer | Mettl (if applicable).

Moodle is protected using two-factor authentication, which means that only DBS students and staff can log into Moodle, and both students and lecturing staff can only log into the Moodle pages in which they are enrolled.

Learners must submit all their CAs via the specific CA submission link in Moodle. Upon submission, learners verify that the work submitted is their own, and their submission is then scanned by our text comparison software, Ouriginal. The learner (and lecturer) is notified of the percentage of commonality, and the learner has a chance to resubmit if they think the percentage of commonality is too high.

Learners also access online exams in the first instance via Moodle. Moodle is used to further link to our secure online proctoring environment, Mercer | Mettl, whereby learner activities can be monitored during the exam via a live stream. A core requirement of online exams is to preserve exam integrity.

Once the assessment has been submitted, lecturers access submissions and provide grades and feedback within Moodle. Learners also use Moodle to access their grades and feedback. After an assessment has been marked and released, grades are pushed from Moodle into our student information system, TSM.

Evaluation

Assessment and evaluation are monitored through Programme Team meetings, Programme Boards and the Annual Programme Report. Scrutiny is achieved through the Moodle Audits and Peer Observations. Faculty are required to comply with the assessments as set out in QQI documentation, but they also have the scope to use the Board of Studies mechanism, as appropriate, to make changes to assessments for pedagogical enhancement. The Academic Director and Assistant Academic Directors have a very open dialogue about assessment and evaluation and how to embed innovative assessment for current and future students. Issues are explored and resolved at Programme Team meetings. For example, if there are indications that assessment methods may need to be changed, any such proposals must originate and be discussed at a Programme Team meeting before these changes can be sent to the Board of Studies for consideration.

Feedback from External Examiners is consistently good, with it being noted that assessment standards are appropriate to the level and consistent with expectations and other providers. Also, consistent student outcomes and progression rates add confidence to the appropriateness of the assessment being carried out.

That said, assessment is probably one of the largest areas of risk and opportunity for the College in the changing environment. In March 2020 DBS moved all exams online, of necessity, as might be expected, due to COVID-19. In this process, all exam papers, which had already been submitted and had undergone QA checks with moderators and External Examiners, were reviewed by the Registrar's Office and classified according to type, and dialogue was had with individual lecturers regarding any changes that needed to be made to ensure the papers' suitability for deployment online and consider risks around security. At this time, however, learners were themselves new to the online environment, and learners and staff expressed significant anxiety about the technical practicalities of online assessment, more so than about security concerns. Exams were deployed online via Moodle as timed assessments. They were not proctored, but a team was online during the exam to monitor Moodle activity and answer questions via the phone and a Live Chat function embedded in Moodle.

Since then, DBS has chosen to keep exams online, firstly due to continued uncertainty for learners and staff during COVID-19 restrictions so that everyone had early information on how exams would be deployed for the duration of an academic year, but additionally due to the benefits for learners in the flexibility this affords. In 2021, aware of the need for heightened security to ensure integrity of assessment, DBS piloted the use of online proctoring software. The approach taken, in line with research on international best practice, was light touch and non-punitive. In every assessment cycle since, DBS has reviewed exam policy and procedure

to respond to changes in the external environment and patterns emerging. At this time, while deployment of the software is well understood and supported and does not provide any barriers to learners completing exams, unfortunately with changes in technology and generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), the practice is again under review.

GenAI is obviously also just as considerable a consideration for CAs as it is for examinations. While staff are encouraged to utilise the through the Board of Studies to make enhancements to their modules where appropriate, there is a recognised need to urgently review all assessments for the academic year 2024/25 in order to robustly mitigate for the impacts of GenAI. Notwithstanding the existence of robust policies and Principles of Assessment as set out above, DBS sees this as an opportunity to improve its assessment practices overall and move to more innovative and authentic forms of assessment. This will be challenging, but it is a challenge being faced by the whole sector.

Another area for improvement is around feedback to learners on their assessments. Feedback from students is consistent that they would like more and better feedback in order to improve. External Examiner feedback, module survey feedback and our national student survey, StudentSurvey.ie, indicate satisfaction in general with the assessment process. However, similar to other HEIs, feedback from External Examiners and learners indicates that our assessment feedback is not always timely or of good quality. To address this, work has commenced on the creation and implementation of module-specific marking rubrics.

Additionally, as set out in Chapter 1, as the College continues to grow, challenges around the efficient administration of all assessment processes have been a continuing issue. The Exams Office is currently involved in an ongoing review of process improvements to strengthen the systems in place to support the function going forward. There are constraints and impacts arising from systems and processes, whereby the Exams Office is dependent on work elsewhere, such as correct registration of students, timely upload of exam papers, input of grades into Moodle and correct grade calculation, which may impact on the next steps in the process.

Conclusion

The evaluation of assessment of learners has revealed both areas of strengths and opportunities for improvement. Our revised assessment strategy has been implemented, and regular reviews of assessment by Academic Directors and Programme Teams are in place.

We must ensure faculty continue to follow the assessment strategy and consistently seek to identify areas for improvement. We must also ensure that practical operational matters that have been created by the migration to a new student information system are addressed quickly in advance of the next academic year to reduce the need for manual processes.

Areas for Improvement
1. Continue to develop and implement marking rubrics to support timely and constructive feedback to learners.
2. Institute a review of assessment to address concerns around generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) and design innovative assessments that require learners to display more nuanced knowledge and skills.
3. Investigate the use of GenAI to reduce the potential of academic impropriety.
4. Review IT systems to facilitate optimisation of the workflow for assessment processing to support the quality assurance function.

Supports for Learners

Introduction

DBS has organised student support across four pillars:

- Academic Supports
- Student Life
- Student Health and Wellbeing
- Careers.

This allows student support to be looked at and provided through the students' needs or requirements instead of the more traditional functional lines.

For transnational programmes the provision of supports is provided by our partner institutions. These supports are assessed during the Due Diligence for Transnational and Collaborative Programmes.

All students on collaborative programmes with DBS and partner institutions have full access to all DBS supports.

As Figure 13 shows, the pillars also easily demonstrated and bring to life the interfunctionality and dependency of different areas of the College in providing each pillar, creating common purposes, goals and unified communications and messages to students.

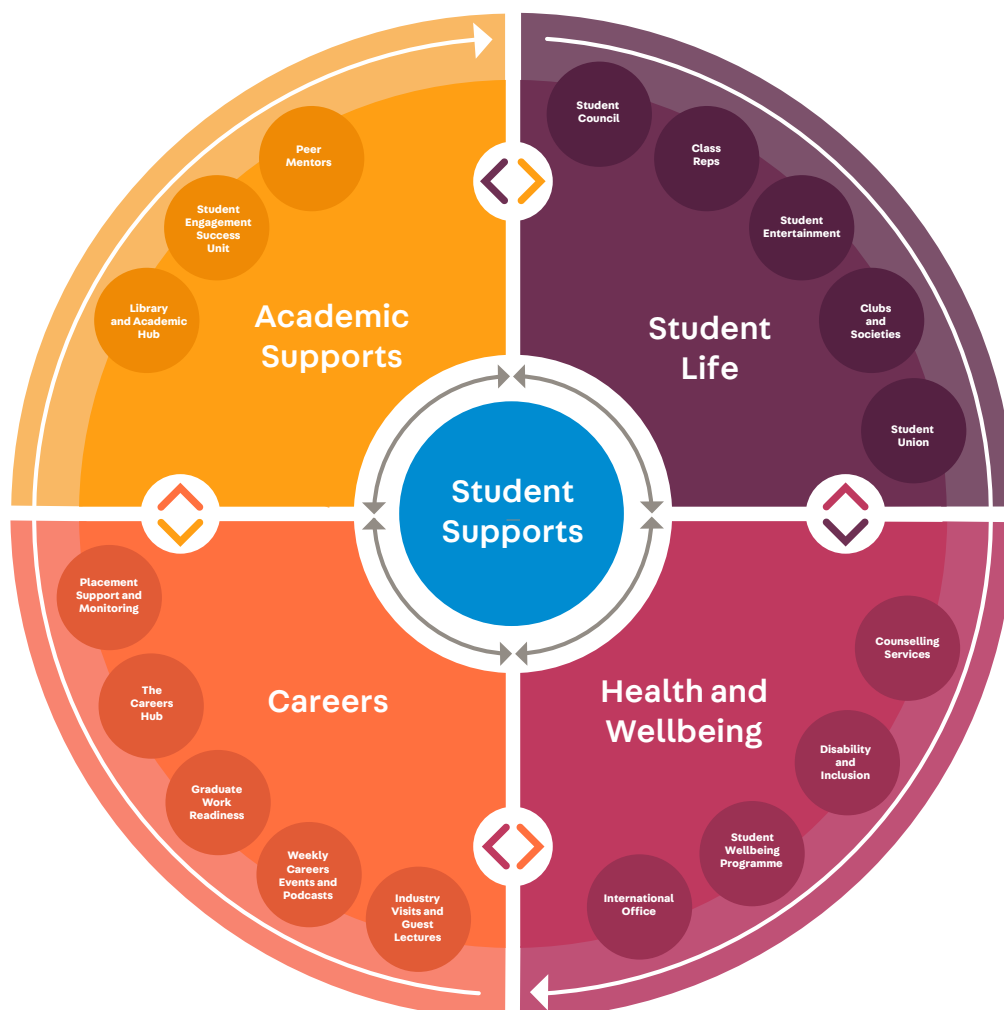


Figure 13 DBS student supports

Student Academic Supports

Description

Academic support for learners at DBS is coordinated by the Academic Support Community (ASC), established in 2022/23. The ASC brings together staff-led support through the Library, student-led support through the Student Experience (SE) Team and targeted support for at-risk learners by the Student Engagement and Success Unit (SESU). The Learning Unit joined the ASC at the start of the 2023/24 academic year.

The purpose of the ASC is to create a culture of academic excellence and support that contributes to the academic success of the students, their retention on programmes and their overall satisfaction. The focus of the ASC is to further evolve the academic supports offered to students, and in particular to target and assist those students that are at risk academically.

The main ASC output for 2022/23 was the development of a new seven-phase learner journey across two semesters. Each phase includes a series of targeted resources, supports and events for all learners. All content is integrated and organised across the three units – Library, SE Team and SESU – to avoid duplication of material and workshops. Communication is also coordinated, with targeted emails issued at fixed dates to both staff and students across each intake. Assistive technology, wellbeing details and useful contacts are also included in the communication, although the content is primarily academic and does not provide College-wide updates. Table 7 shows the supports for the learner journey across the academic year.

Table 7 Academic supports for students across the academic year

Semester 1	Semester 2
Introductory email	
1. Are you ready to learn?	5. Refocus and re-energise
2. Assignment success	6. Breathing week
3. Applying feedback	7. Exam Success (4-week plan)
4. Exam success (4-week plan)	

Evaluation

The academic year 2022/23 marked the first annual report of the ASC. Each unit within the ASC compiled its own review of the year’s work. Document ISER 16 in the associated confidential information folder shows this report. This process was a critical component of the College’s effort to develop and maintain an organised and sustainable programme of support that improves the quality of the student experience. The evaluation per unit focused on the effectiveness and accessibility of the College’s academic support resources, including the Early Alert report, Library workshops, study groups, assignment and exam supports, disability support and other related services.

There have been a number of initiatives following the coordination of academic supports within the ASC. These include:

- **Enhanced student engagement:** The seven-phase learner journey was created to mirror the learning process of the two 12-week semesters.

- **Improved Academic Supports:** The ASC provided targeted resources and interventions to improve academic performance, including My First Assignment, Formative and Summative Feedback library pages, as well as communication on study skills, time management and a dedicated Moodle page on exam preparation.
- **Enhanced Accessible Learning:** The ASC ensured that support services are accessible to all students, including those with disabilities or specific learning needs, by providing accommodations and tailored resources.
- **Coordinated Communication:** The ASC implemented planned communication via email, web pages and social media to increase awareness of resources.
- **Data Collection:** All workshops and drop-in exam preparation sessions, both academic and non-academic, are recorded, and the collection of data has commenced.

The ASC has enabled us as an organisation to bring a very clear focus on the student's academic journey through DBS. Our approach is based upon leveraging data on student engagement at critical junctures through the 12 weeks of the first semester. We have started to develop learnings and insights on the optimal points in the semester to make interventions to support students who are at risk of struggling and disengaging. These interventions are designed to operate at both programme and individual student level.

It was recognised in the first annual report of the ASC that the effectiveness of the initiative needs to be reviewed. Specifically, the report recommends 'The ASC to conduct periodic evaluations of the effectiveness and impact of the ASC including end of semester reviews. This will help identify areas for improvement and ensure that the services align with student needs for the next semester and next academic year.'

Student Life Supports

Description

Student Life Supports enable learners to have a full and active College experience outside the classroom. Extracurricular participation and engagement help to form long-lasting bonds and friendships and allow learners to develop as well-rounded citizens. Class Reps are a key part of this support pillar, and these are trained through the Union of Students in Ireland's initiative NStEP.⁷ The SE Team works closely with the DBS Student Union to create a full schedule of entertainment and leisure activities, actively encouraging students to develop their communication and leadership skills through participation and officer roles in the many clubs and societies in the College.

Evaluation

By working in partnership with the DBS Student Union, the College ensures that the Student Life Programme meets the needs of all of our learners. The Student Union Officers understand what type of events and activities learners want, and the College facilitates these taking place. Similarly, all clubs and societies are led by learners, with support and training provided by the SE Team to ensure that they successfully engage the student body.

Every week throughout the academic year carries a different theme, with activities based on the theme.

During the academic year there are on average 30 events, activities or trips held every month, catering for every student's taste.

In the last quarter of 2023, DBS had over 51 active clubs and societies, with over 23% of the full-time student cohort being members of a club or society.

⁷ National Student Engagement Programme

Student Health and Wellbeing Supports

Description

Health and Wellbeing supports are grouped as Disability and Inclusion, Student Wellbeing, Counselling Services and The International Office.

The Disability and Inclusion function was reviewed in June 2021, and a new position of Disability and Inclusion Officer was created. Changes were made to the process to reflect an emphasis on inclusivity and equitable opportunities for all our learners.

The Disability and Inclusion Officer works closely with the Wellbeing Officer to ensure coordinated and streamlined supports for learners. A cross-functional Disability and Inclusion Group meets weekly, consisting of Disability and Inclusion Officer, Wellbeing Officer, Exams, SESU, Learner Unit and Library. This group coordinates supports and all disability and inclusion communications to staff and learners.

The Disability and Inclusion Officer is the point of contact for all learners who are experiencing mental wellbeing or other difficulties. Assistance and advice are given in a non-judgemental, supportive and confidential manner. Free counselling is provided through a third party, MyMind, to all students who request this service.

The International Office sits within Student Services and meets the unique needs of our international students. As the demographic of the student body has changed, the services and support DBS provides to international students have also evolved and risen in importance.

Evaluation

DBS has benchmarked our Health and Wellbeing supports against the [HEA Higher Education Healthy Campus Charter and Framework](#) and strives to integrate health and wellbeing across the whole College, including teaching and learning, student supports and services, staff development and policies.

The partnership with MyMind works exceptionally well for DBS students. It guarantees that a student has access to a counsellor within 72 hours of contacting the Disability and Inclusion Officer, ensures total privacy, and makes counselling available in several different languages. Working closely with other areas in the College, wellbeing interventions and activities are in place at particularly stressful times of the academic year, such as when assessments are due to be submitted or leading up to and during exams.

Three per cent of the active student population are registered on the DBS Disability and Inclusion register. This percentage has remained consistent over the past 5 years. For comparison, in the academic year of 2020/21 students registered with disability support services represented 6.6% of the total student population of the responding Higher Education Institutions (see [AHEAD Students with Disabilities Engaged with Support Services in Higher Education in Ireland 2020/21](#)). There is a notable decrease in the number of international students registered across the sector, representing just 2.4% of the total number of reported international students in 2020/21 according to AHEAD. This may account for the lower percentage than sector average in DBS, with a growing percentage of international student enrolments.

The International Office is benchmarked against the relevant areas in the [QQI Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners](#) and exceeds requirements in all sections. This benchmarking will form the basis of the DBS application for the International Education Mark when the application process opens, anticipated to be in late 2024. Document ISER 18 in the associated confidential information folder shows the DBS mapping against the code of practice.

Student Career Supports


Description

Career supports are provided through the Careers Hub, with the Careers Team dedicated to ensuring that students are equipped with the right skills to achieve their career goals upon graduation. The team constantly keeps focus on what is needed to create a work-ready graduate, what skills a work-ready graduate needs to succeed, and how can we equip our students with these skills.

Careers pathways have been tailored for each cohort of students depending on their stage of learning in order to prepare and coach every student to be work-ready upon graduation. Figure 14 shows an example of such a pathway.

Checklist for Career Success

First Year Undergrad Students



The Careers Hub is delighted to welcome you to Dublin Business School. As you are kick starting your new semester, it is also really important that you have taken all of the steps to give you a head start with the potential employers.

Graduate Attributes Self Assessment	Have you completed the Graduate Attributes Self Assessment ? This is a short questionnaire that will measure you against the key skills employers are looking for. It will offer practical advice on how to improve your score and make yourself more employable.
The Graduate Work Readiness Programme	Completed the Bronze level of The Graduate Work Readiness Programme . This is a series of online lessons that allows you to improve the key skills that employers are looking for in graduates.
DBS Careers Hub LinkedIn Group	Join the LinkedIn DBS Careers Hub Group . This is where you will find employment opportunities that range from full-time, part-time, internships and graduate programmes. This is also the first stop where we will post any upcoming careers fairs or employer events.
Podcast episodes	Check out our recent podcast episodes which are essential listening for all students; we talk to experts who give advice and pointers which will help you on your job search.
Clubs & Societies	Have you joined a club or society this year? It is one of the best ways to enjoy the full student experience and improve your CV.

Figure 14 Careers pathway for undergraduate final year

Evaluation

In 2022, DBS became the first private Higher Education Institute (HEI) to participate in the HEA Graduate Outcomes Survey. This is a nationally representative annual survey of graduates from 23 HEIs. Graduates are surveyed 9 months after graduation to determine their employment or further education status. The [2023 HEA Graduate Outcomes Survey](#) showed that 83% of all graduates were in employment 9 months after graduation, with a further 10% in further education. This is compared to DBS responses: 78% of DBS graduates were in employment 9 months after graduation, with 5% in further education (for DBS graduates this is a drop of 3% and 1%, respectively, from the 2022 survey).

DBS undergraduates are roughly in line with the national average percentages; however, there is a large difference between DBS Masters and the national reported responses. Only 79% of DBS Masters stated that they were in employment or further education, a drop of 5% on the 2022 figures.

These low numbers are reinforced by the number of students attending careers workshops and other supports; despite workshops being embedded in full-time Masters timetables and students being told that they are mandatory, only 37% of full-time Masters students attended these workshops in the fourth quarter of 2023. The Careers Team have focused efforts to improve attendance at careers workshops and engagement with the Careers Team, have fostered a greater presence in College, and have developed the DBS Graduate Work Readiness Programme, increasing participation and thus improving outcomes.

Conclusion

DBS has a very comprehensive set of supports for students, covering academic, wellbeing and career needs and general student life. The supports are well known among the student body. In an internal survey of students carried out in March 2024, referenced in Chapter 1 and included as Document ISER 2 in the associated confidential information folder, 68% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were fully aware of the available supports

available to them as a learner in DBS. In the same survey, 53% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that DBS ensures consistency in the availability of appropriate supports to all learners across different settings. Just 5% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

While academic supports are necessary in any Higher Education Institution (HEI), the profile of DBS students requires that additional supports are available. Many of our first-year undergraduate students come to DBS because they have not received enough Leaving Cert points to be offered a place in a public HEI. As such, they often come with increased academic and learning requirements. The increase in the number of international students means a larger volume of students at DBS have come from a different learning culture, so supports around academic elements such as academic writing, research and critical thinking are more important.

A broad range of Student Life supports are available, with almost a quarter of full-time students participating. Given the increasing number of full-time students, mainly international ones, this level of participation is a significant contributor to the international learning experience of these students.

Strong Health and Wellbeing supports are in place. These follow best practice across the Irish Higher Education sector and are communicated effectively to students. The proportion of the total student body availing of disability services is low and less than the national average, although the proportion is higher among international students.

The career supports in place are strong and communicated effectively to students. However, engagement across some cohorts and programmes is poor, resulting in graduate outcomes below sector averages. Regardless of the number of supports and interventions in place, unless there is a compelling reason to engage with the Careers Hub, a proportion of the student population will not partake in these interventions.

Areas for Improvement
1. Introduce a student-friendly Student Contact Management System to allow a single channel for students to seek and receive support and advice.
2. Enhance the user interface and structure of content on the student portal to facilitate access to information, supports and advice.
3. Make greater use of business intelligence tools to enable the development of more tailored supports.
4. Create a mechanism for measuring the effectiveness of Student Life activities to assess their impact on the overall student experience in DBS.
5. Embed student supports more effectively into the overall learning experience, communicating comprehensively with faculty to enable this.
6. For transnational programmes, ensure that the supports provided by our partner institutions are benchmarked against DBS supports periodically to ensure we meet the needs of our learners in all settings.
7. Embed career supports more effectively in the learning experience, including considering the creation of credit-bearing careers elements in a programme.
8. Develop the Careers Team offerings, assistance, and support for students on work placement

Chapter 3: Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

Quality Assurance (QA) planning is an essential process aimed at ensuring that our products or services meet defined quality standards before delivery to our learners. This chapter outlines the strategies, methodologies, and resources necessary to achieve quality objectives throughout the academic lifecycle. In DBS, we achieve this via various processes, including Annual Quality Reports, Academic Plans, Surveys, Audits, Reviews and others.

By meticulously outlining these aspects, QA planning lays the groundwork for systematically monitoring and enhancing the quality of deliverables, ultimately contributing to customer satisfaction and organisational success.

These reporting mechanisms, undertaken or disseminated at different points of the academic and calendar year, and with varying frequency, ultimately build on each other through the various levels of operational and academic governance set out in Chapter 1 of this document and chapters 5 and 6 of the *Institutional Profile*, which cover Academic Governance and Quality Assurance. Reports go to the Academic Board and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), with key findings raised to the Executive Board. Figure 15 sets out a high-level overview of the different reporting mechanisms and how they move up through different governance and oversight bodies.



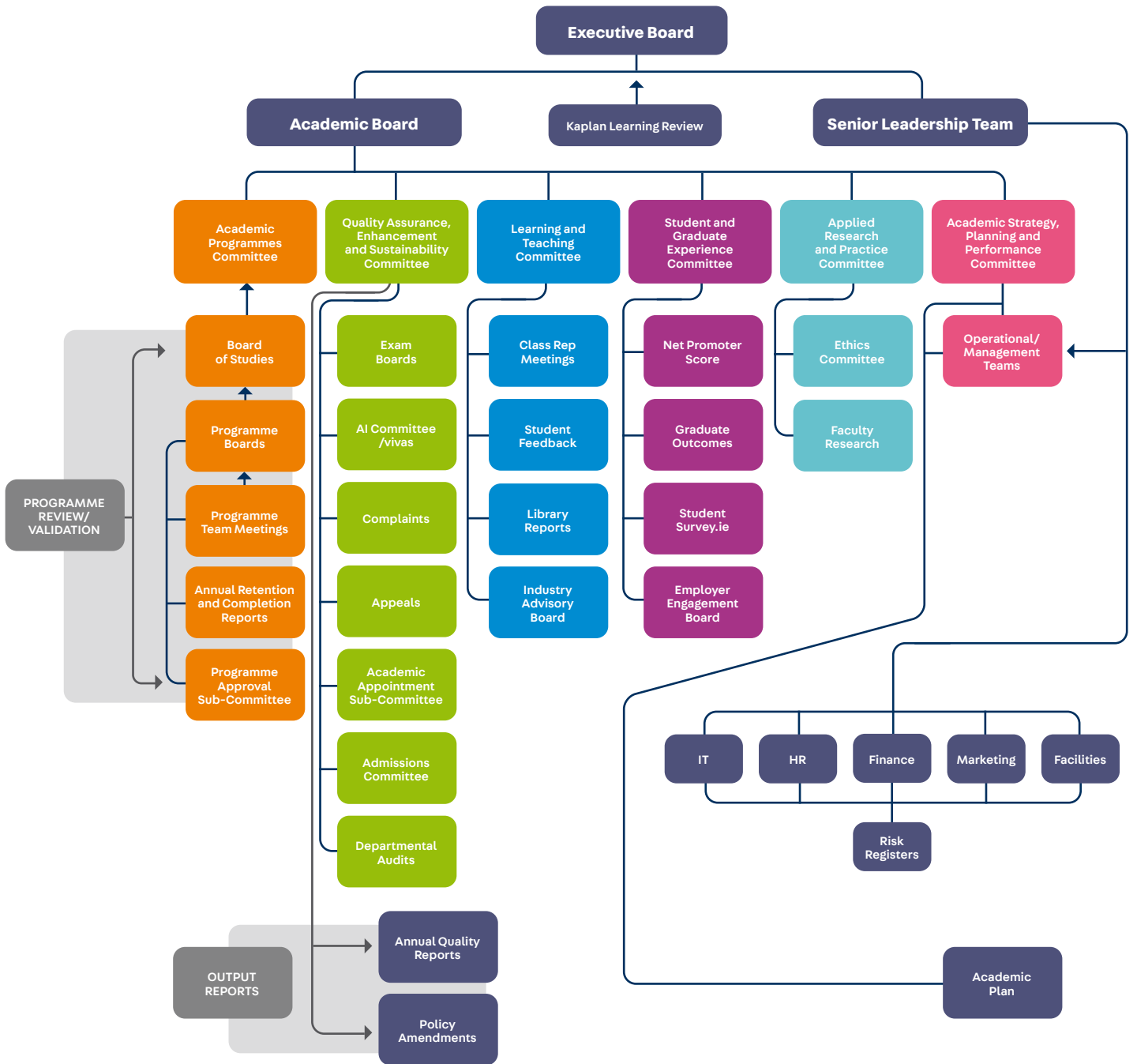


Figure 15 Overview of reporting sources and flows

Quality and Qualification Ireland (QQI) Annual Quality Report

Description

In common with other independent higher education (HE) providers, DBS has been producing an Annual Quality Report (AQR) for QQI since 2021. At the time of submission of this ISER, DBS had just completed its fourth AQR submission, covering the academic year 2022/23. Completion of the AQR is a requirement under QQI, and DBS adheres to the template set out by QQI. While completion of the AQR is led by the Registrar's Office, since commencing this reporting requirement in 2020, DBS has been cognisant of the need for the exercise to be a College-wide endeavour.

For the first iteration of the report, covering the academic year 2019/20, a Steering Group comprising members of the SLT and other key areas of responsibility was convened to ensure a fully comprehensive approach. In completing this first report, the College also chose to include information on QA processes going back over the period since Re-Engagement, seeing the report as an opportunity to capture developments in this intervening period. Following this first submission, DBS has continued to take a collaborative approach to completion of the report. As standard practice, during the summer period the document for the next submission (February each year) is prepared by the Assistant Registrar and circulated to the SLT and other stakeholders. Areas of responsibility are assigned and the document worked on collectively. The report is presented to and discussed by the SLT and Academic Board and approved by each of these bodies before final submission to QQI. When private providers submitted their first AQR, QQI arranged for dialogue meetings with each provider. In our case, the full SLT attended that meeting, underscoring the importance of the AQR process, and QA in general, to the organisation and demonstrating the commitment of the whole College.

Evaluation

While, as noted above, the AQR is a requirement under QQI, DBS had recognised the value of this exercise to the College as a whole in terms of ensuring a regular focus on quality-facing developments. While the report is by its nature somewhat repetitive year-on-year (Part A of the document, as instructed by QQI, remains largely static), there is value to the College in tracking and reporting on areas such as updates in policies and procedures, reviews carried out and reviews approaching in the coming cycles. That said, while multiple stakeholders feed into the preparation of the report, there is not good visibility of the document internally following its submission to QQI. The document is published on the DBS website but is not necessarily referred to widely outside the need to prepare the next report for the coming cycle. In addition, following the first submission, the Case Studies section has been something of a missed opportunity for the College in capturing and showcasing best practice.

Conclusion

As an opportunity to focus stakeholders in the College on quality assurance and enhancement, the AQR is a valuable regulatory exercise. Now that this reporting is established within the College, an opportunity exists to gain further traction in this area. While constrained in the submission format for QQI, the key aspects from Part B of the report could be disseminated in a more user-friendly format across the College. The Quality Assurance, Enhancement and Sustainability Committee (part of the new committee structure constituted in 2023) will assume greater oversight of the AQR going forward. This will include earlier identification of potential case studies, linked with other recognition of good practice in the College, such as Kaplan Way Awards.

Areas for Improvement

1. Embed the process for completion of the Annual Quality Report in the workings of the Quality Assurance, Enhancement and Sustainability Committee.
2. Develop a strategic approach to identification and development of valuable case studies for inclusion in the AQR through other processes in the College, such as nominations for Kaplan Way Awards.
3. Consider improved ways to disseminate the key outputs in the AQR to raise awareness of the importance of this document across the College.

Academic Plan

Description

The Academic Plan was first constituted in 2021, under the direction of the Academic Board, for an 18-month period from mid-2021 to September 2023. This was updated for the academic year 2023/24 and is intended to be updated annually going forward. The Academic Plan is integrated with the *DBS Strategic Plan* and sets out detailed actions and timelines under the following areas:

A. Student

- Student Recruitment
- Admission and Induction
- Academic Administration
- Student Experience

B. Academic

- Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy
- Teaching Delivery
- Assessment Delivery
- Academic Support
- Employability and Careers Supports
- Transnational Delivery
- Activity and Outcome Analysis

C. Research

- Applied Research

D. Regulatory

- Governance and Quality Assurance
- Institutional Review and Delegated Authority
- Annual Quality Review
- Programme Validation and Revalidation
- Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Bodies (PSRB) Approval

D. Central Service

- Teaching Facilities, including EdTech
- Staff Development.

A copy of the Academic Plan was provided to the panel with the *Institutional Profile* as Document IP 9 in the associated confidential information folder. Figure 16 is an excerpt to demonstrate the format.

5. Teaching, Learning & Assessment Strategy
Contributes to Strategic Objective 2 - Deliver outstanding learning

Goal
 To review and develop teaching, learning and assessment strategies that continuously improve the delivery of teaching and the learning partnership with the student, ensuring that students understand assessment requirements and how to prepare for undertaking those assignments and exams, thereby providing the best opportunity to the learner to achieve their best academic outcome.

Statement of Strategy
 We will be known as a learning-centred HEI that integrates educators, learners and industry experts in the learning experience. We will increase the flexibility of the learning environment.

Action (What will we do?)	Target time & milestones (When will it be done?)	Performance measure (How will we know when it's done?)	Stakeholders (Who is involved and who leads?)	Strategic Objective
Complete key actions from SLATE 2 across the three goals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning experience, prep for employment and others Flexible learning environment Ecosystem of learning 	Throughout the AY	Report on SLATE 2 to SLT summer 24	Academic Dean	SO2
Produce annual discipline reports based on programme performance from the prior year	By end sem 1	Published reports presented to SLT	ADs/HoD Academic Dean	SO2
Ensure compliance with QQI and professional body requirements	On-going	Compliant audit report	Registrar's Office Academic Dean ADs/HoD CCO	SO1 SO2 SO5

Figure 16 Academic Plan format

In preparing the Academic Plan for 2023/24, actions from the previous plan were reviewed and summarised.

Evaluation

The Academic Plan is currently in its second iteration. As such, it is a relatively new endeavour which will benefit from further evaluation once it is established practice. It serves as a useful mechanism to identify actions and goals which might otherwise be assumed, but it also provides accountability for senior members of the team and a link back to the strategic goals of the organisation. It is certainly the case that the document should be further integrated into the workings of the College so that, rather than revisiting it at scheduled points, it becomes a central focus around which other work is based.

The introduction of an Academic Plan arose from a specific direction from the Academic Board to the SLT, and its format was heavily influenced by the Independent Chair of the Academic Board.

Conclusion

The Academic Plan provides a means to set and track goals for the organisation. As it evolves and the institution matures, it should become a central focus for the work of the College.

Areas for Improvement

1. Ensure mechanisms are in place through the appropriate governance areas for regular review of progress towards the goals of the Academic Plan during the academic year in order to ensure that this is a live working document that is visible and a key point of reference for all stakeholders.

Risk Registers

Description

As set out in Chapter 1, risk registers are now in place for all departments, following the same approach and structure as the overall institutional risk register. The SLT conducts an annual risk review in its December meeting, analysing macro and micro risks for the College.

While not needing to repeat the commentary on risk management provided in earlier chapters of this document, there is an additional comment to make on monitoring and review. Arising from the review of governance structure for the Re-engagement Process with QQI, a new sub-committee of the Academic Board was introduced: the Quality Enhancement and Risk Management Committee (QERMC). This group was tasked with monitoring, reviewing and updating existing QA policies and procedures, and with identifying and assessing risk as it relates to programme development, delivery and review. Until the review of the Academic Board's subcommittees in 2023, this group maintained a risk register which was revisited at each convening for a status update and identification of potential action. However, this register was not fully aligned with the SLT's institutional risk register and was actioned less effectively. With the review of the Academic Board subcommittees, this group was replaced by the Quality Assurance, Enhancement and Sustainability Committee (QAESC), which retained a role in critical risk assessment and escalation while also taking on broader scope in other functions. This new formation remains in the initial phases of establishing its modus operandi and effectively engaging with the risk register, but we are confident that it will now form part of the risk registers of the relevant academic departments (Registrar's Office, Academic Dean Department, and Teaching Delivery Department), and that from there it will integrate with the institutional risk register.

Evaluation

As already outlined, the risk register under QERMC required enhancement and alignment with the institution-level risk register. While several risk areas were identified and escalated for management, the lack of a standardised format and escalation mechanism made a number of interventions ad hoc, with limited scope for closing the loop on resolution. The transition into a new body, at the same time as risk registers have been rolled out across all departments, has offered the opportunity for an improved implementation and oversight.

Conclusion

Risk management at the institutional level has evolved greatly in the last 2-3 years. More recently, local risk registers have been introduced, and the integration of these and academic risk management instruments now sets a basis for more effective management and mitigation of academic risks.

Areas for Improvement

1. Review the academic risk management system to ensure it is effective in its own right and that it is integrated, as outlined, with the institutional risk management system.

Annual Review of Policies

Description

The *Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH)* is the central document underpinning academic quality and delivery in DBS. It was extensively reviewed during the Pilot Re-engagement Process which DBS participated in with QQI in 2017/18 and again as part of the full Re-engagement Process, which concluded at the end of 2019. Since then, policies within the *QAH* have been added to, amended and updated regularly, with all updates documented through the Quality Assurance Handbook Tracker (see [2019 Edition](#) and [2023 Edition](#)). There is an established process whereby the Registrar's Office keeps a register of new policies which need to be written or updated, and these are developed for consultation with the relevant boards and committees, and for eventual approval by the SLT and Academic Board.

The Public Information and Communications section in Chapter 1 sets out an overview of the revisions to the *QAH* since the Re-engagement Process.

The policies set out in the *QAH* each carry a formal review date, typically 5 years from the point of approval, or a shorter period where it is known that the context is changing, such as with changes in technology; however, feedback for particular policies may trigger a review for introducing an amendment that is raised through the Academic Board and SLT, where appropriate, for approval. An automated system notifies the Registrar's Office when a policy nears its review date. The policy is then included in the next Review cycle, circulated for feedback and finally revised by the QAESC for Academic Board approval.

Evaluation

The *QAH* is a robust document which covers all key areas supporting the quality infrastructure of the College. It is regularly updated to respond to strategic developments for DBS, such as approval for delivering blended learning programmes and Devolved Responsibility for Programme Validations. External factors, including QQI's revision of *Assessment and Standards (revised 2022)* and the widespread use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) platforms like ChatGPT, are also considered. These updates anticipate the impact on teaching, learning and assessment. Individual policies are also kept under review for their effectiveness as new situations arise; for example, the student Complaints Policy has been reviewed on a number of occasions based on learnings from specific scenarios.

The *QAH* is frequently referenced by staff, including faculty, for accessibility and understanding of policy and procedure. It assists in daily tasks and responding to student queries. However, complex policy points are usually directed to the Registrar's Office. Some policies may not be well known or understood in terms of their application. Learners are introduced to the *QAH* during induction, when it is highlighted in their *Programme Handbooks*, and reminded throughout their studies via semesterly 'Key Assessment & Regs Reminder' emails aligning with their learning journey and assessment stages. While those drafting policies within the *QAH* have been actively conscious of learners as a target audience, the distillation of policy and regulatory language into easily readable descriptions remains challenging.

Therefore, the presentation and location of the *QAH*, including reducing word count and streamlining policies, could be a valuable piece of work to be carried out. It should be noted and acknowledged that due to the time frame for the Institutional Review process, further work has not been carried out to gain specific feedback on the *QAH*, the commentary and analysis here being based on interactions with the Registrar's Office over several years.

Conclusion

The *Quality Assurance Handbook* sets out policy adequately in compliance with requirements for the College. It is reviewed and updated regularly, but there is an opportunity for a more substantive review to make it more accessible in the future.

Areas for Improvement

1. Review the process for triggering updates to policies in the *Quality Assurance Handbook*.
2. Develop a plan for and complete updates to all policies and new policy creation which was commenced in 2023.
3. Ensure accessibility and visibility of the *QAH* to learners and staff through the websites and learning platforms.

Kaplan Learning Reviews

Description

DBS is required to present an annual Learning Review to the Chief Executive Officer and other senior academic leaders in its parent company Kaplan, the education division of the Graham Holdings Company. This presentation is carried out by the President and Academic Dean. There is no set template for the Learning Review, but quantitative data on pass rates, learners returning, learner withdrawals, programme completion, graduate outcomes and student feedback is typically presented and discussed. A sample Learning Review document is included as Document IP 4, provided as additional documentation with the *Institutional Profile*.

Evaluation

The Learning Review is a good example of the additional oversight applied to DBS by its parent company. As a requirement, it sets an expectation that data on learner performance is recorded, available and benchmarked. In the main, this is now happening effectively, and since the first Learning Review some years ago, the quality of the data, the ease of collecting it and the analysis done has improved.

There are some weaknesses that can be addressed. There is little available benchmarking data in the Irish HE sector. This is not within the College's control, but membership of HE organisations such as AACSB⁸ provides access to international benchmarking data.

As DBS has matured in terms of capacity, structure and systems, it is now time to extend the analysis beyond the full institution or programme learner cohorts. Significant value will be added to academic decision making when Learning Review reports include analysis regarding more granular cohorts. For example, analysis of learning outcomes by domestic and international students would be useful to understand, and within those groupings, a more detailed analysis of markets or profiles will identify the relative performance of these groups and actions needed to ensure their learning outcomes are maximised.

The Learning Review meetings with senior Kaplan leaders have begun to include more than one Kaplan institution. For example, at the forthcoming Learning Review in May 2024, DBS and Kaplan Business School in Australia are paired. This provides useful benchmarking, networking and learnings across Kaplan entities.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that as a subsidiary of a NYSE-listed company, the reporting and compliance demands on DBS are greater than many other Higher Education Institutions in the Irish market. This places many demands on the resources of the College, but the Learning Review with Kaplan leaders has proven to be a very useful focal point for the academic leaders at DBS. Referencing other higher education organisations within the Kaplan Group, thereby precipitating some internal competition, has raised the reporting and analysis capacity and performance of DBS.

Areas for Improvement

1. A more templated approach to the Learning Review will enable easier production and trend analysis.
2. Introduce more granular analysis of learner outcomes by cohort.

⁸ Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business

Annual Retention Reports

Description

The Annual Retention Report is a substantive document which sets out student retention and completion across all DBS programmes.

The report presents the data in such a way as to allow comparison of student outcomes across the College. For all intakes in September, January (as applicable) and March/April (as applicable), pass rates are provided as a percentage of the total number of students enrolled across student groups as follows:

- Levels 6–9, full-time students
- Levels 6–9, part-time students
- Funded programmes (Springboard+/ICT Skills/Human Capital Initiative (HCI))
- Study Abroad
- Professional Diplomas.

This data is further broken down by discipline and by level for every programme and every cohort of students (by intakes, full-time and part-time). Document ISER 14 in the associated confidential information folder shows an example of a retention report. For each area, the previous year's pass rates are provided for comparison purposes. As well as the quantitative data presented, the reports include a short descriptive narrative under each area setting out the overall trends. The reports do not include analysis of reasons for these trends.

The retention reports are created by the Data Analytics and Reporting Manager and approved by the President for distribution to the Academic Dean, Academic Directors and Senior Learner Support and Retention Officer. The report is also submitted to the Academic Board and included as an agenda item for presentation and discussion.

Evaluation

The retention reports have been generated for each academic year since 2012/13; therefore, a large body of data exists relating to student success in DBS. The data is used by the Academic Directors in assessing the performance of the programmes in each of their areas. Where anomalies are identified, especially downward trends in pass rates, analysis is carried out with interventions defined to address any issues which might relate to the overall quality of teaching delivery.

Examples of interventions or changes arising from a review of the reports include workshops hosted by the Student Engagement and Success Unit (SESU) to address particular areas. As far back as 2016, weak results in Year 1 Business modules Maths and Statistics for Business (Level 8) and Business Maths (Level 7) were highlighted. A SESU workshop called Numerical Skills was created, and there are currently 22 hours in an academic year provided online. Similarly, a trend with the Year 1 Economics Perspectives module has been seen and extra support added as a SESU workshop in the academic year 2023/24. It was also agreed that the five-credit Year 2 module Advanced Economic Perspectives be allocated 12 additional support hours in Semester 2. Low progression of Level 9 students for some cohorts has also been identified, also with weak outcomes in areas such as research methods. Supports have been put in place through additional support for academic writing and computing and programming skills.

While individual reports provide the previous year's pass rates in each category, they do not include a longitudinal analysis by programme category year-on-year. Some analysis of this has been carried out separately by the Data Analytics and Reporting Manager. As programmes may be retired and new programmes are constantly being introduced, longitudinal comparison in some areas is not necessarily meaningful. In addition, some benchmarking with available Higher Education Authority (HEA) data based on data provided in its 2010 and 2018 reports, has been undertaken. However, there is limited availability of sector-wide data regarding retention and completion rates.

While the data captured is proactively used to inform the work of the College, the process for gathering and presenting the information is quite manual and labour-intensive, and this in turn limits the opportunities for deeper engagement with the data to analyse trends. Currently, data is manually downloaded in the form of Excel/CSV files from the student information system before being cleaned and presented in table and chart form in Excel by the Data Analytics and Reporting Manager. It would be beneficial to avail of data visualisation tools which would empower Academic Directors and Programme Teams to interrogate trends and compare and contrast the information across modules and programmes for different cohorts.

Conclusion

A large volume of learner transactional data is available on the student information system and was held on the previous system for many years. DBS has been reporting on this data for over 10 years. More analysis of the data can be done, both within-year and longitudinally, to enable greater insight and usefulness in academic decision making.

Areas for Improvement

1. Consider the introduction of data analysis or business intelligence tools to enhance the analysis of recorded data.

Annual Programme Reports

Description

Adjacent and complementary to the Annual Retention Reports are the Annual Programme Reports for each discipline area, which are produced by the Academic Directors. These reports were re-introduced in an updated format in 2020 following completion of the cyclical Programme Review and Revalidation for a large number of programmes in the College. It was recognised at this time that, while the College was already reporting on a large amount of data such as (but not limited to) student retention and completion across all areas, there was a need to ensure consistent monitoring of delivery across programmes and discipline areas. While learners were generally well looked after in each subject and discipline area, through the Programme Review process it was recognised that there was an absence of readily available information and analysis of programme delivery on an ongoing basis, which the re-introduction of Annual Reports aimed to address. Annual Programme Reports are collated from the monitoring activities of the Programme Boards, which meet once per semester for each discipline area. Presentation of the reports is formally required at the Board of Studies meeting each November. The reports include the following areas:

- List of all programmes
- Programmes under review for revalidation
- Programmes in development
- Learner numbers by discipline – age, gender, nationality profile
- Learner numbers by programme – age, gender, nationality profile
- Learner performance by programme
- Industry engagement – Industry Advisory Boards, guest lecturers, events, work placements
- Trends, strengths and weaknesses
- Actions from previous report
- Actions for the next cycle.

In their first revised iteration for 2020/21, a presentation on the Annual Reports was provided by the Academic Directors to the President of the College and other members of the Senior Leadership Team. The 2022/23 reports were formally presented at meetings of the Senior Leadership Team in January and February 2024.

Evaluation

The creation of Annual Reports ensures that issues relating to programme content and delivery are centrally captured, enabling trends to be identified. While feedback, such as from External Examiners and students, is captured and responded to at a module and programme level, the collation of information around all programmes at a discipline level allows for an overview of emerging trends and themes. Issues identified within the Annual Reports may be followed up immediately or may inform changes to programmes or modules in the next cycle of review.

Examples of issues identified and discussed in Annual Reports include:

- Changing numbers of learners on programmes – increases in numbers and challenges arising in ensuring learners are supported, or declining numbers which may make a programme less viable over time. For growing numbers at postgraduate level, for example, additional supervisors were recruited. Where numbers decline, this is considered based on the overall trend; for example, some programme numbers increased significantly during COVID-19 and returned to normal levels following the easing of restrictions. Elsewhere, declining numbers may reflect a change in skills requirements or employment opportunities, and this shift would inform the Programme Review.

- Profile of learners – learners from diverse backgrounds who may need different supports, such as with academic writing or other skills. Initiatives put in place include the Postgraduate Academic Writing Skills programme and the Computing Academic Technical Skills programme.
- Progression of learners – uptake of opportunities for progression from a Level 7 programme to Level 8, or Level 8 to Level 9 within DBS.
- Issues relating to content on Moodle, and subsequent initiation of Moodle audits across all areas to ensure quality and consistency. The Moodle audit initiative has greatly supported the QA processes, and issues on the Moodle platform have been identified and rectified very quickly.
- Marking on modules with high student numbers – faculty have raised concerns about their individual workload and capacity to mark within the time frame to meet Exam Board requirements. An expression of interest for grading excess assessments/exams is in progress to resolve this demand on time outside of the classroom.
- Appropriateness and effectiveness of online examination in the era of generative AI (GenAI). Discussions are ongoing around the use of online examinations and which programmes they are suitable for.
- Issues around lecturer and learner numbers within programmes. Information from the reports is used to ensure compliance with the ratios is being considered in group formation.
- Concerns around increases in academic impropriety and associated commentary on assessment strategies overall. Module-level changes to assessment have been brought to Boards of Studies (the mechanism for approval of changes within the scope of a validation). Other initiatives around academic integrity have been initiated at a College level and are ongoing.
- Consistency in the use of task, scenario and assignment specification. This is noted as an ongoing issue for learners in a small number of cases. The Head of Department for Arts, Languages and Study Abroad has issued further guidance, templates and support to enable consistency across modules and programmes.
- The nature, timeliness and detail contained within feedback to learners. In cases where the volume of assessment causes feedback delays, extra resources (another grader/marker) are assigned.
- Grading criteria (and/or marking rubrics). These need to be made available to learners at the issuance of an assignment, task or test so that learners are aware of the expectations, criteria for assessment and the expected achievement of learning outcomes and how that is described.
- Trends emerging in certain programmes relating to increased deferral rates. Identification of these has led to cohort-specific meetings with the relevant academic leaders and Programme Teams to explore the reasons behind the increase in deferral and develop strategies and interventions to address it. These meetings are live and have fed into ongoing revalidations and programme redesigns.
- A move towards addressing the academic support modules in programmes to include more guidance on contemporary and technology-based skills in order to further scaffold learners through assessment by novel and modern assessment tools. For example, indicative syllabi will now include instruction on multimedia design and technology for digital content creation. Traditional assessment retains its place in assessment strategies; however, the move towards including more video-based and podcast-type assessments may go some way to addressing the issue of GenAI-sensitive assessment tools.

Conclusion

Annual Reports are now in their third iteration and are established as a formal reporting requirement for the College. An opportunity exists to consolidate the approach to reporting to ensure better alignment across discipline areas and consistent implementation of reporting.

Areas for Improvement

1. Review templates for Annual Reports and the content included to maximise their value and ensure the required information is being fully captured and followed up.
2. Ensure Annual Report content is fully aligned with the requirements for Programme Review and thus seamlessly feeds into this larger process.

Departmental Audit

Description

In 2023 the College introduced an audit function within the Registrar’s Office and appointed a second Assistant Registrar to oversee this process. This additional function was identified as desirable for strengthening oversight of compliance in all areas of the College and for providing assurance of independent oversight when applying for Delegated Authority from QCI.

The objective of this audit process is to carry out a review of all departments across the College with respect to infrastructure, risk identification, controls, documentation and ongoing compliance with policies and procedures. In the first cycle, in addition to departmental audits, specific areas such as the management of student work placements and programmes with Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Bodies (PSRB) requirements have been included.

A process has been defined by the Assistant Registrar as follows:

- Walkthroughs are conducted through in-person meetings with each department to understand roles and responsibilities in each area.
- All ‘controls’ for each department are set out in terms of actions that must take place and associated data and evidence.
- A Requirements List is issued to each department regarding required documentation.
- Controls are tested through a review of documentation to ensure compliance in each area is evidenced.
- A final audit report setting out findings is produced.

Figure 17 provides an extract from a work-in-progress control sheet for the Library and Academic Hub.

A	B	C	D	I
Sr. No	Sub-Department	Controls	Type of Control	Data Required
17	Overdue	Check whether this activity is carried out on a weekly basis.	Internal	-
18	Overdue	Check whether depending on the reasons for the overdue and whether the borrower had previous contact with the library the fines can be waived subject to the Head of AIRC approval.	Internal	AIRC Approval
19	Social Media	Check whether the approval from the Head of AIRC and the Marketing Department has been taken before the social media account is made by the library team.	Internal	AIRC Approval & Marketing Head Approval
20	Social Media	Check whether all the content uploaded 2-3 times a week on social media, is approved by the Reader Services Manager.	Internal	Approval from Reader Service Manager
21	Social Media	Check whether the Library team had posted outside the schedule may happen in situations such as Orange/Red weather warnings, or when situations beyond the control of the institution occur that affect library services.	Internal	-
22	Stocktaking	Check whether Reader Services Manager initiates stocktake activity on an annual basis and had recorded all the relevant files on G drive by creating a folder for the current year (Library - Stocktake - "year").	Internal	Library - Stocktake - "year"
23	Stocktaking	Check whether staff had run the report called "Before stocktake (AS) on the Koha system.	Internal	-
24	Stocktaking	Check whether the staff had scanned each item on every shelf.	Internal	Library - Stocktake - "year"
25	Stocktaking	Check whether the staff had performed reconciliation between DLA and Koha for missing items.	Internal	Reconciliation done between DLA & Koha
26	Stocktaking	Check whether based on the list of the missing items, had the staff changed the status to "missing".	Internal	Logs of Koha
27	Student Enquiries	Check whether library staff is answering Email inquiries in a timely manner (24h).	Internal	Email communication sent to Students relate to queries
28	Student Enquiries	Check whether library staff is answering Ask-A-Librarian webchat in a timely manner (5 minutes).	Internal	-

Figure 17 Extract from department audit

Figure 18 shows the sum of controls currently identified under each area. The audit process is ongoing at the time of writing.

A	B	C	D	E	F
Sr. No	Departments	Total Controls	Compliant	Non-Compliant	% of Compliance
1	Student Experience	140			
2	Library Management	134			
3	Information Technology (IT)	95			
4	Ondemand Content Development	40			
5	Agent	15			
6	Facilities	15			
7	Marketing	80			
8	Faculty Management	70			
9	Human Resource (HR)	130			
10	Registry	115			
11	Academic Dean	318			
12	Academic Operation	153			
13	Other QQI Matter	40			
14	Other Bodies	115			

Figure 18 Controls identified in departments across the institution

These figures demonstrate the granular and detailed nature of the process.

Evaluation

This type of audit process is new for the College, and the first cycle is not yet complete. It is expected that upon receipt of the first audit report, there will be areas where non-compliance has been identified, with follow-ups required to close any gaps. It is important to note that compliance here is identified in the broadest terms with respect to any process which may be undocumented, poorly documented or applied inconsistently, regardless of the seriousness of the issue. As such, this is a binary process, with areas being found to be either compliant or non-compliant. Upon receipt of the audit report, the Senior Leadership Team and other managers will review and decide on suitable actions. In some cases, no action may be required if an issue is deemed to be sufficiently low stakes or a normal occurrence with low risk to the business. An example would be the non-return of books to the Library and Academic Hub, where there is some expectation of the loss of a small number of texts over time.

Following the initial audit, the process will be reviewed to consider how it might be most useful to the College in the future.

Conclusion

The audit process is intended to provide another layer of governance and compliance checking for the College at a granular level. It is recognised that this is a unique approach for a Higher Education Institution. It is envisaged that the process will evolve, likely being used to focus on specific areas as issues arise.

Areas for Improvement

1. Review the outcomes of the first audit cycle in order to inform the next stages of the process.

Student Feedback

Description

DBS formally collects feedback from learners through a variety of processes and instruments. It is important to note that the learner voice is also incorporated through learner representation on the Academic Board, Programme Boards, Learning and Teaching Committee, and Student and Graduate Experience Committee, as well as through the Student Council.

Module Surveys via Moodle

At the end of every module, we undertake a survey of learners' academic experience. The survey covers five areas: teaching and learning, module content, module support, assessment and feedback, and overall satisfaction. Each of these areas includes questions that the student rates on a 1–5 scale, where 5 is the highest score. The DBS internal target is a minimum score of 4.

At an overall level, the internal target across all five areas has been exceeded over the past three years. However, analysis by discipline indicates that some areas occasionally score less than the internal target of 4. For example, in 2022/23 all areas in the discipline of Marketing scored less than 4.

Class Representatives

Class representatives provide learner feedback on their programme stage. This is a synergistic initiative that not only ensures learners can experience the transparency of decision making within the College but also provides an opportunity for them to participate in the decision-making process. The feedback from these meetings typically includes facilities-related issues; queries regarding the timetabling of assessment and exams; general comments on timetables and requests for timetable changes; and specific feedback on lecturers, delivery and other services provided by the College. It is important that the opportunity to provide feedback also captures comments that reflect how the learners' experience at DBS is positive, with any concerns about workloads and module delivery being addressed at each point.

Sector-Wide Surveys

Since 2020, DBS has participated in the national survey of student engagement – StudentSurvey.ie – conducted on behalf of the Irish HEA. All the questions asked in the survey are openly available for review, and they cover nine areas of academic engagement that a student can have with their institution. StudentSurvey.ie provides a wealth of data, both quantitative and qualitative, which can be easily broken down in many ways through the use of the i-graduate In Touch interactive dashboard.

Net Promoter Score

The Net Promoter Score (NPS) is a single-question student satisfaction survey, asked once a quarter of a random selection of students. The question asks if the learner would recommend DBS to a friend, and the outcome is calculated using a scale of 0–10, whereby a detractor is any score of 6 or less, neutral is a 7 or 8, and promoters are 9 or 10. The survey also allows for optional qualitative feedback from our learners. DBS conducts this survey as part of our position within the Kaplan organisation, where it is deployed across all business units, and it is used as a metric of the business's performance.

Complaints

The DBS Complaints Procedure also attempts to provide students with an official line of recourse in order to resolve complaints or issues to the mutual satisfaction of the complainant and the individual, service or department against which the complaint or issue is made. It is, therefore, a useful source of feedback from students. Appendix 14 details the various metrics recorded in relation to complaints.

Categorising the subject of a formal complaint can be challenging where the incident arising is a confluence of multiple teams or stakeholders, or where the complaint is initiated following a sequence of different smaller incidents which have exacerbated each other.

Notably, not all initiated complaints are formally submitted and subsequently investigated. Across the period from 2017 to 2024, approximately 24% of initiated complaints were never formally submitted for investigation, as reflected in Appendix 14.

Appeals

The appeals process allows learners to challenge College decisions based on suspected irregularities in procedures, regulations or assessment processes, or regarding mitigating circumstances not previously communicated to the College. Appeals primarily fall into two categories: appealing grades and appealing decisions made by College bodies. While not strictly appeals, Grade Verification and Script Viewing processes are associated and may lead to appeals. The mechanism serves as a monitoring tool for the College, identifying individual and recurring issues for annual reporting and programme reviews. Not all initiated appeals are formally submitted due to resolution by the Exams Office or teaching team. Appendix 15 illustrates the total number of appeals initiated, categorised by programme type, from 2018 to 2024. Notably, the Business, Computing and Psychology disciplines consistently show higher numbers of appeals. Despite incomplete final 2023/24 data, the trend of appeals remains consistent, with a decrease in View Script requests since the implementation of online exams due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A new category of appeals relating to the outcome of the Academic Impropriety process was introduced in the 2021/22 academic year for improved reporting and oversight.

Evaluation

Moodle Surveys and Class Reps

As might be expected, common themes tend to emerge from learner feedback. At a module level, follow-up on feedback tends to focus on comments in relation to delivery, which is actioned by Faculty Managers with faculty members. However, the feedback mechanisms allow us to gather a large amount of data which, if used effectively, would allow significant enhancement across both modules and programmes. Some common themes being addressed as projects for the College include:

- **Communication of information to learners:** Learners experience information overload, and individuals have a range of preferences regarding how they are communicated with. The College aims to streamline communications through the introduction of a new ticketing system and online chat functionality. The College is also looking at artificial intelligence solutions to help support learners.
- **Timetabling changes:** The College aims to minimise changes, but given the complexity of operations, changes do occur. These are tracked, with targets set to reduce how many changes are made. This will be achieved by improving the original timetable presented to learners and closely managing faculty requests for leave.
- **Feedback on specific aspects of teaching delivery:** Where appropriate, interventions are made specifically with the aim of supporting faculty in the classroom. This may take the form of peer mentoring, review of Moodle content or recommending further support via a buddy system.

Sector-Wide Surveys

Since commencing participation in StudentSurvey.ie, DBS has performed very well and generally ranks above the average of all HEIs, and above the average of all other categories (universities, ITs/Technological Universities and others) in all nine indicators. Compared to universities, our performance is very strong overall. However, there are two summary questions asked at the end of the survey which seek to ascertain if the student would come

back to DBS if they were to start again and how the student would evaluate their overall educational experience. They are not measures of engagement but indicate an overall view. Despite strong performance on the individual indicators, DBS scores lower on these two non-engagement indicators than other institutions. Why we would score so low is unclear given that we score so highly on the indicator scores.

Notwithstanding the above, there are opportunities for greater analysis and response to feedback. Within the surveys, we also allow for optional qualitative feedback. While this can provide both rich and informative feedback, it can be difficult to analyse, with any analysis often being subjective. We are currently investigating the possibility of using GenAI software to undertake the analysis and provide a summary of results.

Analysis of the large amount of data gathered by the College is often rudimentary. We would benefit from the use of data visualisation tools such as Power BI to create a more interactive dashboard which could then be used across Programme Teams so that module-level data can be used for enhancement rather than performance management.

Similar to the module survey, DBS could be more proactive in closing the feedback loop. While feedback findings are presented to the Student Council, the analysis and implementation of changes at programme level is not highly visible. As a result, there is a risk that students may disengage with the feedback processes, so each year we have to put in a great deal of effort to ensure we have a representative response rate. Closing the feedback loop and showing the students the difference their feedback makes should help improve response rates.

Net Promoter Score

With regard to the NPS survey, this particular format is a difficult survey to 'do well' in, but it is a consistent measure of performance year-on-year. The respondents need to be very highly satisfied and score their experience with a 9 or 10 for a favourable outcome. We are benchmarked across the Kaplan organisation, and for a positive outcome we must provide a top-quality service across all areas of the College. From a self-evaluation perspective, this only gives a snapshot in time of an individual's experience at DBS. They may have had a very positive experience that day or week or, conversely, may have had a bad day due to any aspect of their life in DBS and score their experience accordingly.

Complaints

The complaints process is an underutilised opportunity for learner feedback. Due to the redirection of cases towards an informal resolution in the first instance, where possible, such cases are not formally recorded or tracked and are therefore not available as information sources to identify larger trends or issues. Only those cases that are escalated are tracked and recorded and can be analysed as feedback. As these are typically only serious cases which tend to be exceptionally complex, they do not reflect general trends of issues to be managed systematically. Fundamentally, the process addresses a particular concern regarding a lecturer, module or issue, which is of value in itself, but the feedback insights for module, programme or institutional issues are limited.

Enhanced management of the complaints process might entail the introduction of a log of informal complaints, allowing 'anecdotal feedback' to be collected into datasets that could then be reviewed and analysed. A more advanced project would be the deployment of artificial intelligence software to 'scrape' institutional emails belonging to student-facing teams for instances of complaints or dissatisfaction in order to identify instances experienced but never escalated to a formal investigation. A number of safeguards would have to be in place for such a project, and while individual instances could not be followed up, a broad picture of recurring issues may become evident.

Appeals

The appeals process has proven broadly accessible and effective for learners; however, challenges have included the fee required to submit an appeal for consideration, which may prevent some learners from engaging with the process, and the high number of learners who submit an appeal that lacks valid grounds. Active efforts have been made to make it explicit – in the policy, within the appeals form and in any communications regarding the appeal process – that dissatisfaction with a grade does not constitute valid grounds to lodge an appeal. Nevertheless, a high number of learners still submit an appeal which is subsequently rejected or dismissed. An operational challenge in the appeal process is that the points of peak submissions overlap with the busiest workflow periods for the Quality Assurance Officer situated in the Exams Office because the academic integrity investigations, results release process and post-Exam Board administration coincide. All these activities are necessarily related, so separating out their administration would bring separate risks. However, the workload intensity risks appeal cases being delayed or overlooked, exacerbating learner frustration.

While the data collected offers a high-level overview of the cases submitted, systematically reviewing and categorising appeals has not been feasible. Undertaking such an exercise would improve the insights available for Programme Teams and the College generally, enabling better direction of resources and supports.

Conclusion

The College gathers a large amount of information regarding the student experience. This feedback is regularly discussed in multiple forums, and College staff concern themselves with learner feedback and care deeply about the learner experience. However, analysis of the data and a systematised process for closing the loop on student feedback continues to be a challenge. This was discussed at the meeting of the Academic Board in February 2024. The College is looking at ways to improve its analysis, particularly use of targeting technology.

Areas for Improvement

1. Introduce artificial intelligence-based functionality to manage and collect learner feedback, such as frequently asked question, ticketing systems, analysis of bulk survey responses, data scraping for informal complaints, and managing initial appeal queries that are not eligible for formal submission.
2. Introduce data visualisation tools to set up feedback-presenting dashboards.
3. Extend the Moodle audit process to improve learner experience in the virtual learning environment.
4. Improve the feedback loop closure process, reporting on updates to key learner stakeholder forums on previous queries or issues.
5. Establish a log of informal complaints to improve oversight of issues raised but not formally escalated through the complaints procedure.
6. Conduct a systematic categorising exercise for both appeals and complaints data to enhance reporting opportunities.

Programme Monitoring and Review

Description

Programme Review (for Revalidation)

The cyclical Programme Review process is also covered in the context of Revalidation in Chapter 1. The data collection, analysis and recommended revisions of the Programme Review process are undertaken before the application for a Revalidation is prepared. Prior to 2023, due to the highly iterative nature of the Review and the development of a revised programme, these processes frequently ran concurrently. From early 2023 the Academic Dean, in consultation with the Registrar’s Office, introduced a new workflow to support the differentiation of these phases and ensure the Review received the required degree of focus.

Programme Review is a provider-owned process. Review and Revalidation of any programme is done on a 5-year cycle aligned with the final intake as per the Certificate of Validation. The Programme Review process typically commences 18 months before the end of the validation. That is, for a programme requiring revalidation for an intake in September 2024, for example, the Review process would have commenced in the first quarter of 2023.

The steps in the process are set out in Figure 19. DBS submits Terms of Reference (ToRs) to QQI. These ToRs set out the criteria against which the review is carried out, stakeholders for consultation and sources, proposed changes to the programme and any special considerations. As the review process continues, the ToRs may need to be updated to reflect findings that will influence the final version of the new programme. Proposed panel members are also set out in the ToRs, along with their qualifications and suitability and reason for inclusion in the panel. The ToRs and final panel must be approved by QQI before the panel event can take place.

Programme Review

Internal Programme Self-Evaluation Process

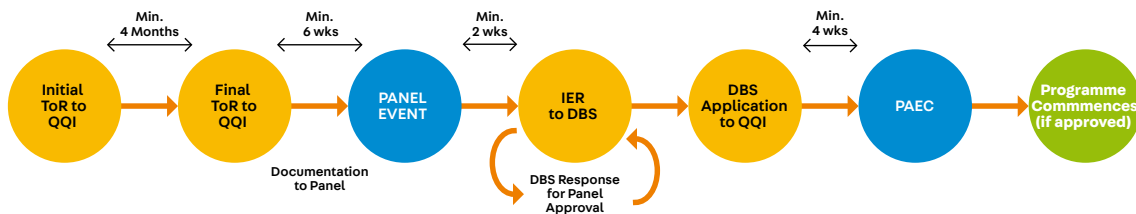


Figure 19 Revalidation process

ToR = Terms of Reference, IER=Independent Evaluation Report, PAEC=QQI Programme Approval Executive Committee

The Review process looks at data relating to the programme, such as:

- Applications and enrolments
- Retention and completion
- Module and awards outcomes
- Graduate destinations
- Learner workload and attendance
- Learning and teaching strategies
- Evaluation by stakeholders: faculty, learners, employers, External Examiners
- SWOT analysis.

Feedback is collected through a number of strategies, in addition to the systematic ongoing data collection mechanisms, such as module surveys within Moodle, External Examiner feedback reports, complaints and appeals data, and the class rep feedback mechanisms. These include targeted surveys or questionnaires and focus groups involving learners, graduates and external stakeholders, which provide insights into particular areas of the programme's delivery and management.

Based on the above analysis as well as feedback gathered longitudinally over the duration of the Programme Validation cycle, the new programme document is prepared.

Prior to or during Review, a programme may be flagged for retirement because of low demand, being out of date or superseded by other programmes, or because of changes in funding or partners. Where this happens, a summary report is prepared, currently by the Assistant Registrar, and submitted to the Academic Board to confirm its retirement. Programmes being retired do not, of course, proceed to a panel. QQI is notified when a programme is retired, with the Review documentation supplied along with confirmation that this has been presented to the Academic Board.

Programme Boards and Programme Team Meetings

Programme delivery is monitored on an ongoing basis through Programme Team meetings (every 4–6 weeks) and through Programme Boards (one per semester). Programme Team meetings are internal facing, with an invitation extended to all faculty (full-time and part-time), Programme Coordinators and Faculty Managers. Agendas are fluid and dependent on arising issues.

The Programme Board monitors and reports on the constituent aspects of the learner experience and formally captures the progress and development of a programme over time, which in turn feeds into the cyclical review. Boards are Chaired by Academic Directors and attended by faculty, Library and learner representatives. Programme Boards occur at a discipline level, with each programme represented and reviewed in turn at these meetings. The minutes of the Programme Board are presented to the Board of Studies, with key highlights and issues noted.

Board of Studies

The Board of Studies is the next line of reporting above Programme Boards, Chaired by the Academic Dean. The Board of Studies takes place twice per year (with the option of additional meetings if required, but see below). Academic Directors report on their discipline area, providing an overview of all areas arising from Programme Boards.

The Board of Studies is the mechanism for approval of any changes to programmes outside of full Review and Revalidation. Changes permitted are limited to within the scope of validation and are closely monitored; changes to learning outcomes, module titles, credits or anything that fundamentally alters the nature of a module are not permitted. Most commonly, changes put forward relate to the format of an assessment, as it may be found that a particular type of assessment is not working well. Where changes are proposed, they must be first approved by the Academic Director and a form completed setting out the proposed changes and the justification for them. The Board of Studies will consider the changes, including any possible impact on the wider programme – for example, whether a change in the format of an assessment may result in a shift towards too much of a single type of assessment or over- or under-assessment of learners. An overview of the outcomes of module amendment applications is set out in Figure 20. A sitting of the Board might 'hold' a decision for further consideration subject to the delivery or regulatory repercussions of the proposed amendment.

Where changes, such as a change to an assessment weighting, would result in a change to the Approved Programme Schedule or are considered significant, QQI is informed in writing. Ongoing changes of this nature are discouraged.

Discipline Area	Date BoS Reviewed:	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	OTHER	Completed previously	TBC	Grand Total											
	Change Approved	24 April 2020	11 Sept 2020	27 Nov 2020	8 Jan 2021	30 April 2021	8 Sep 2021				26 Nov 2021	29 April 2022	2 Sept 2022	2 Sept 2022 15 Sept 2022	25 Nov 2022	12 May 2023	20 June 2023	17 July 2023	17 August 2023	7 Sept 2023	1 Dec 2023
Accounting and Finance	Yes		1							15							1	2			19
	For Info only													1							1
	On Hold																1				1
Accounting and Finance Total			1							15				1			1	3			21
Arts, Languages and Study Abroad	Yes	1			2																3
Arts, Languages and Study Abroad Total		1			2																3
Business	Yes	1	2			1			3	1		3	4		1	6					22
	No	4																			4
	For Info only												1	1							2
	On Hold						1					2		4							7
	Withdrawn/ Duplicate																		1		1
Business Total		5	2			1	1		3	1		5	5	5	1	6				1	36
Computing	Yes								1	1											2
	No			2																	2
Computing Total				2					1	1											4
Human and Social Sciences	Yes	5	2			1			1				2	9	10	3					33
	No	5				2															7
	For Info only														4						4
	On Hold			2		4						2	4	2	2						17
Human and Social Sciences Total		10	2	2		7			1			4	13	16	5					1	61
Marketing	Yes	1							6												7
	No	2																			2
	On Hold					1	1														2
	Withdrawn/ Duplicate																		1		1
Marketing Total		3				1	1		6											1	12
INTERDISCIPLINARY/CROSS-TAUGHT																					
Marketing; Computing	No							1													1
Marketing; Computing Total								1													1
Professional Diplomas	Yes					5															5
	On Hold					1															1
Professional Diplomas Total						6															6
Grand Total		19	5	4	2	15	2	1	11	2	15	5	9	18	18	11	1	3	2	1	144

Figure 20 Breakdown of Board of Studies module amendment application outcomes

As reflected in Figure 21, the majority of applications for module amendments are approved by the Board of Studies as they fall within the parameters of the validation to approve or seek approval from QQI. Refused applications either did not sufficiently demonstrate the pedagogic value of the proposed change or would have breached the validated constraints of the programme.

Change Approved	Discipline Area	Number of Applications	% of Applications by Discipline
Yes	Accounting and Finance	19	90.5%
	Arts, Languages and Study Abroad	3	100.0%
	Business	22	61.1%
	Computing	2	50.0%
	Human and Social Sciences	33	54.1%
	Marketing	7	58.3%
	Professional Diplomas	5	83.3%
	Yes Total		91
No	Business	4	11.1%
	Computing	2	50.0%
	Human and Social Sciences	7	11.5%
	Marketing	2	16.7%
	Marketing; Computing (CrossTaught)	1	100.0%
No Total		16	
For Info only	Accounting and Finance	1	4.8%
	Business	2	5.6%
	Human and Social Sciences	4	6.6%
For Info only Total		7	
On Hold	Accounting and Finance	1	4.8%
	Business	7	19.4%
	Human and Social Sciences	17	27.9%
	Marketing	2	16.7%
	Professional Diplomas	1	16.7%
On Hold Total		28	
Withdrawn/Duplicate	Business	1	2.8%
	Marketing	1	8.3%
Withdrawn/Duplicate Total		2	
Grand Total		144	

Figure 21 Number of applications by Board of Studies approval outcome

Internal Examiner Reports and Moderation

The Examiner Reports and Internal Moderation Reports are module-level, assessment-based evaluation and review reports completed by Examiners and their associated Internal Moderator upon the completion of the delivery and assessment of a module. These processes feed into the integrity and approval of learner results as set out in Chapter 1 and are embedded in the assessment processes as set out in Chapter 2. Upon the completion of grading of the final summative assessment, the Examiner completes the Examination and Continuous Assessment Report, which presents a breakdown in grade distribution and learner performance, and a general commentary on the success of the module and its assessments, with space for recommendations for future deployment. A copy of this report, along with the assessment sample for moderation, is shared with the Internal Moderator, who completes a shorter report detailing their findings on the validity of this marking, the distribution of grades evident, the quality of the feedback and any recommendations or areas of concern for the Examiner.

Prior to 2018, these reports were completed in hard copy and submitted to the Exams Office for preparation for review by the External Examiner. In 2018/19, the Exams Office digitised the forms, both to centralise the collation of the reports into a singular record and to expedite their transfer to the Internal Moderator and thus back to the Exams Office for external examining preparation. The digitised version provides the Examiner with a copy of their responses, forwards a copy to the Internal Moderator and links them to their own online form to complete when the sampled material has been received and reviewed. With the pivot to fully online assessment packs during COVID-19, this online format was more fully integrated as Examiners and Moderators no longer chose to print out copies of their reports to accompany hard-copy packs of assessments for moderation.

Three enhancements to this online reporting process have been introduced since 2018. The first was a 'Massive Fail' alert, wherein an alert is triggered to the Exams Office and the Registrar's Office, through the Quality inbox, where a fail rate of more than 30% is reported by an Examiner, based on the numbers they set out for the grade bands and expected numbers of learners. This alert could then be followed up to determine whether the high fail rate was reasonable (such as on a repeat sitting, where already weak students make up a larger proportion of those presented in the report and with relatively fewer numbers, exaggerating the proportion of learners failing an exam compared to the first sitting) or whether further review is required. Where appropriate, the high fail rate can be escalated to the Academic Director for investigation, and ultimately an informed response can be implemented during an Exam Board where a high fail rate is made evident.

The second enhancement was the 'Additional Supports' log. The Examiner Report includes an opportunity to note areas where additional supports for learners may be needed. This is an open-text field and may account for any kind of additional supports. In the initial iteration of the report, these elements were only fed back to the Examiner and Internal Moderator, and no escalation was implemented automatically. To enhance the management of this data, a new trigger was created to alert the Registrar's Office, Student Engagement and Success Unit (SESU), and the Exams Office if an additional support was cited. Due to the range of potential supports identified – from referencing classes to individual learner concerns to hardware or software requirements – the escalated trigger could be recorded and escalated to the appropriate teams. This has led to the creation of an 'Additional Supports' log where such cases are collated, categorised by support type and support source, and thereby fed into work plans and reporting systems for different teams. A sample of additional supports logged and their categorisation is set out in Figure 22.

Module Code	Concern Raised	Category	ProgTeam	Library	SESU
B8BU110	Assistance with academic writing, report compilation, and organisation for a student.	Individual Student Concern	Business	Research Skills	Academic Writing Classes
B9HR105	Prior to exam in another subject student had informed me that she is dyslexic – this did not present as an issue on this module because assignments provide time for preparation.	Individual Student Concern	Business	N/A	Individual Student Concern
B9RS105	Class size is too large to determine with any level of certainty the requirement for student support. However, one student had very evident issues in expressing herself in English – I'm aware of this because she sat at front of each class and struggled to ask questions. It is likely that other students were 'hidden' in the very large class and didn't ask questions.	Class sizes/ Individual Student Concern	Business	N/A	Individual Student Concern
A6FM121	A larger lab space for groups of this size.	Class sizes	Arts	N/A	N/A
B6AF104	Learners need training on proctored exam.	Online exam – upload support	Business	N/A	N/A
B8AV105	Academic referencing for foreign students.	Academic Writing & Referencing	Acc&Fin	Referencing Classes	N/A
A6HC105	Early and continuous reaching out in case of students disengaging, to enhance engagement and boost motivation.	Learner Engagement	Arts	N/A	Learner Engagement
A9PS111	Some foreign language students on this module seem to struggle with writing and forming arguments.	Academic Writing & Referencing	Psychology	N/A	Academic Writing Classes
A7FM105	I think if English is not your first language, which is the case with a lot of students on the new programme, additional supports in this area would be great.	Language	Arts	N/A	N/A
B7BU100	Mentioned previous, academic writing and more opportunities for students to present, critical thinking and analysis classes would be beneficial to students. Sometimes there are language barriers so supports around English Language would also be beneficial.	Academic Writing & Referencing/ Language/ Presentation Skills	Business	N/A	Academic Writing Classes/ Presentation Skills

Figure 22 Sample 'Additional Supports' log extract

The final enhancement, like the 'Additional Supports' log and 'Massive Fail Alert', was the introduction of a similar notification to the Academic Integrity team where suspicions of misconduct were identified. While the formal process of submitting a report of a suspected misconduct case for investigation remains a required step, this trigger allows for the Academic Integrity team to identify incoming cases and follow up where a formal report is not received in order to ensure the process is closed off fully.

External Examiner Reports

Reports and feedback from External Examiners are received at four formal points in the academic cycle, in addition to the informal, ongoing communication channel maintained by the Academic Director and the respective programme leads. The formal feedback points are:

- Exam paper review (prior to the hosting of an exam)
- Assessment sample review (following the completion of a module)
- Exam Boards (during the ratification of results and consideration of particular learner outcomes)
- Year-end Annual Reports.

Depending on the nature of the programme in review, these points may recur multiple times within the academic year as semesterised modules or new intakes join the programme.

Prior to 2019, the mechanism by which material was shared with External Examiners and their feedback captured was through hard-copy packs, processed by the Exams Office, often supported by the Academic Operations team due to the large scale of material to be prepared and organised. Feedback could be received either in hard copy with the returned material or as a digital copy of the form with annotations in the Exams inbox, or it might be returned directly to the Examiner. Due to these consistent feedback routes, and the time required awaiting physical material to be returned, alternative digital mechanisms within the institutional Google Suite were explored.

From the end of 2018 (for exam paper feedback) and the start of 2019 (for assessment sample feedback), the Quality Assurance Officer, under the oversight of the Assessments and Regulations Manager, introduced a digital version of the Exam Paper and Assessment Sample review forms. During a transition period in which material was still shared in hard copy but the feedback collected digitally, the new forms were embedded into the process for both External Examiners and the Internal Examiners awaiting their feedback. The new feedback mechanism was collected centrally in records held by the Exams Office, which could thereby be analysed holistically across disciplines, levels and programmes, but also specifically for individual modules across different cycles, and for lecturers undertaking multiple modules. The feedback mechanism also allowed for a direct transfer to the Examiner rather than awaiting Exams Office processing, and sometimes postage timelines, through an automated mail-merge system of feedback received. This same mechanism also offered External Examiners the opportunity to retain a copy of their feedback digitally for subsequent reporting. This digitisation significantly increased the efficiency of the transfer of External Examiner feedback to faculty and allowed a centralised oversight of the feedback received for exam papers and reviewed assessment samples. This centralised tracker has proved beneficial in reviews of learner appeals and compliance audits.

The External Examiner Annual Report remained in the traditional Word document format until mid-2020, at which time it was similarly transitioned into an online form that could facilitate the immediate receipt of the report by the Academic Dean and the Registrar's Office, which could then be raised to the relevant Academic Directors and other programme leads. This transition was more phased than the previous reports due to the amount of information collected in the report, which continued the format of a previous template set out by Liverpool John Moores' University during the period in which they validated a number of the College's programmes. An exercise is currently underway to transfer the responses of the reports prior to the introduction of the online form into the centralised tracker in order to allow a broader oversight and analysis of the reports.

The receipt of an External Examiner Annual Report is tracked on the institutional External Examiner Mastersheet and raised to the relevant programme leads. A formal response is prepared by the Academic Director, and the key components of the feedback are brought back to the Programme Team where it relates to academic delivery and assessment, while operational aspects are raised to the appropriate teams, such as the Exams Office. These Reports are held centrally for inclusion in the development of Programme Board Reports and Programme Review Reports in the Revalidation process.

The Exam Board process facilitates further External Examiner feedback, giving an opportunity to raise comments directly following the consideration of any grades being ratified and to engage directly in discussions regarding learner outcomes, where appropriate, during the Exam Board. The move to host Exam Boards online in response to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions has proved beneficial for improving the attendance and engagement of External Examiners; partly as a result of this benefit, Exam Boards are intended to remain online going forward.

Tracking of Conditions and Recommendations from Independent Evaluation of Programmes

Following completion of any Programme Validation or Revalidation, all conditions and recommendations in the Independent Evaluation Report are collated in a centralised spreadsheet held by the Registrar's Office. These are monitored by the Registrar's Office, in consultation with the Academic Dean and Academic Director Team, to ensure continued compliance at a programme level. While most conditions arising from a validation process must typically be addressed before the programme can be validated, some may be longitudinal in nature, such as a requirement to monitor the success or other aspects of a programme delivery. They are also tracked to ensure that no changes in policy or process, or module changes made through the Board of Studies, are contradictory to any conditions set.

Central tracking of conditions and recommendations also allows for review of any emerging institutional themes recurring across programmes. Following the last major Programme Review and Revalidation cycle, an extensive thematic analysis of all recommendations, conditions and commendations was completed by the Head of Academic Programmes (former role) and submitted to the Academic Board. Actions arising from this review that related to condition included:

- Develop a Programme Teaching and Learning Strategy for each programme to clarify how programme aims and objectives reference module class-contact time (versus European Credit Transfer System credits (ECTS)), specific eLearning content, relationship to non-credit bearing support workshops, etc.
- Ensure that assessment is equitable, rationalised, actively curated and holistically scheduled by the Programme Team to constructively assess programme and module learning outcomes and ensure that student workload is well managed.
- Ensure that modules (including title and topics) are sufficiently differentiated from each other in any programme or related programmes at higher or lower National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) levels and are appropriate and sufficiently fleshed out at the stated NFQ level.
- Ensure annual programme reporting is achieved for each DBS (accredited and non-accredited) programme.

Similarly, actions were also set out against all recommendations. It should be noted that DBS always aims to fulfil recommendations. All actions were collated and assigned areas of ownership within the College.

Evaluation

Programme Review (for Revalidation)

As set out in Chapter 1, the Programme Review process has typically been effective, but in the current review cycle (2023/24), weaknesses in the robustness of the Review and data analysis were identified in some areas. For a particular Review, weaknesses in data presentation and analysis resulted in questions as to how the Review process could robustly inform the proposed new version of the programme. The issues identified were largely not a result of the data and findings of the Review process being unavailable or not having been considered, but rather in their presentation and evidencing within the report. In part, the additional workload entailed in collating this information and preparing a Review report was identified as a factor resulting in this incident, partly due to the highly iterative nature of conducting the Review while developing a new programme based on its findings.

As noted in Chapter 1, lessons learned from this have been documented and other programmes currently under review checked to ensure that the required standards are being met. The College has also taken learnings on board and provided training for Programme Teams in this context. Key learnings are:

- The Review process should be sufficiently separate from the programme development process to ensure sufficient focus is given to both.
- The approach to data analysis in all Programme Reviews needs to be revisited.

It has been identified that the Annual Programme Board Reports have been underutilised in the process of these Reviews and could be leveraged more efficiently and effectively. The Annual Retention and Completion Reports collated by the Data Analytics and Reporting Manager could similarly be drawn upon more effectively. In some cases, extracts from these Reports are included in the Review process for summary figures of the statistics without further exploration of their potential findings. An enhanced data analysis system, as discussed elsewhere in this report, could make analysis and exploration of the data more effective.

The Review process is conducted by the Programme Team leads, drawing upon a broad range of feedback inputs involving qualitative to quantitative data. While the analysis tends to be strong, the College could leverage its own pool of research experts among faculty and Masters capstone supervisors to 'independently' review the research methodology and analysis of findings in order to support the Review team in enhancing their analysis.

Where a programme is identified as not suitable for Revalidation, the Review process is a smaller exercise undertaken by the Assistant Registrar. Any enhancement to the collation of data across all programmes would enhance this process. As the Review process for a programme being retired does not carry the same deadlines as a Review for Revalidation, it can be delayed in completion.

Board of Studies

The Board of Studies, being open to all members of the College to attend, offers a valuable opportunity for Academic Directors to report on their discipline area, drawing from relevant data and reports, and make this information available to members of other disciplines. Such transparency and visibility are benefits being considered for extension to the Academic Board.

The process of reviewing and approving proposed module or programme amendments is robust enough that while most applications are approved, these still only make up 63% of cases considered. The Board has sufficient scope to refuse applications identified as not suitable, for whatever reason. An opportunity for enhancement would be the introduction of a pre-Board screening mechanism, such as a consultation session with a member of the Registrar's Office and peer faculty to advise on the proposed amendment, to offer screening feedback which might reduce the number of ineligible applications, and to hone other applications towards a successful construct.

A risk to the Board of Studies process is where amendments are presented 'out of necessity' post facto, wherein an interim mitigation for a module or programme is sought for permanent implementation.

Internal Examiner Reports and Moderation

The digitisation of the Examiner and Internal Moderation Reports has improved the efficiency of the progress of the examined material and reporting through the grading process prior to the hosting of an Exam Board. The introduction of the 'Massive Fail Alert', 'Additional Supports' log and academic misconduct alert have similarly allowed for quicker identification of potential issues within modules or assessments, with immediate escalation to a reviewing team who can evaluate whether further escalation is required, or if the reported case was raised in error or with reasonable grounds.

A centralised focused review of the quality of the reports submitted by Examiners and Internal Moderators has not been possible to conduct. However, there could be significant benefit in systematically analysing the data across and within discipline and programme areas rather than its current limitation to direct use by the Examiner and Internal Moderator. Similarly, access to the previous reports on a module would be useful for lecturers taking on that module for the first time; however, the integration with other systems to identify new module leads is not currently in place. The manual maintenance of components of the centralised record can also be subject to error, such as the failed implementation of formula or mail-merge functions within the report, requiring sufficient monitoring to identify and address.

The 'Additional Supports' log initially led to individual emails being escalated to the Academic Director, but their broad coverage of disciplines made case-by-case intervention unviable. The timing of the reports, following the completion of the module's delivery and grading of the final assessments, necessarily meant that intervention opportunities for that module were often no longer possible and could only be considered for future deployment of the module, or in any subsequent stages for learners of the same cohort, to be implemented by different lecturers who might not be familiar with the basis of the intervention. This log was therefore reverted to a collation of reports and shared with the Academic Directors, SESU and Library teams cyclically to collate their findings from the recent cycles and inform future action rather than directly intervene for a particular cohort, unless the nature of the case allowed it.

External Examiner Reporting and Processes

While the management and operationalisation of External Examiner feedback mechanisms has improved through digitisation since 2018, several challenges have been identified as lingering from the previous process or have emerged through recent developments. A consequence of the move to more online sharing of material and feedback, and Exam Boards, has been an increased potential for the perceived separation of the External Examiner from the Programme Team, weakening the informal, ongoing communication channel and engagement between these teams. Similarly, the centralisation (and automation) of the feedback mechanisms through the Exams Office and Registrar's Office have risked a disconnect with the quality assurance (QA) process for the teaching team, wherein the 'ownership' of or responsibility for the process is perceived to sit with these offices rather than as an embedded component of the Programme Team's own QA processes. More active efforts around fostering the relationships between the External Examiners and the Programme Team need to be considered to mitigate these unforeseen consequences. Related to this, the College has a goal of further progress in oversight of non-exam assessment sampling being shared with External Examiners.

While the feedback process with the digital feedback forms has been made significantly timelier and more efficient, further work is needed to close the loop regarding the feedback received, whereby External Examiners can receive updates regarding specific feedback provided against a module or assessment sample. The current model limits the closure of this loop to oversight of the final grades at the Exam Boards and the Academic Director's response letter to their Annual Report. Individual instances of action recommended are not necessarily visible through these high-level processes to assure the External Examiner that action has been taken. A proposed amendment to the forms to trigger an escalated alert where feedback requires explicit follow-up is under consideration for effective implementation, embedding a concern ranking within the qualitative feedback. Due to the late transition of the Annual Reports into the centralised digital format, a comprehensive, independent and centralised review of External Examiner feedback across disciplines has not been feasible, and the analysis of these reports remains limited to individual discipline-area reports.

In some cases, compliance with the responsibilities of the External Examiner role has been difficult to enforce. As external agents who tend to already be heavily involved in various academic activities, any non-engagement with the feedback process or attendance at Exam Boards can be challenging to identify as non-engagement rather than late compliance or problems with conflicting schedules. With the recent assumption of responsibility for managing the External Examiner network by the newly appointed Quality Assurance Officer in the Registrar's Office, new consideration for checkpoints and interventions is commencing to identify and manage External Examiners who appear to disengage.

Broader reporting timelines have impacted the External Examiner reporting process, such that the original Annual Report template set out space to identify the award outcomes for the cohorts under review in that particular cycle. The data for that current cycle would rarely be fully available at the point in the academic calendar when the External Examiner undertakes their Annual Report (typically following the September Exam Board period), and the manual tracking of outcomes would not be feasible due to the large number of External Examiners and the variety of discipline coverage. Alternative reporting mechanisms need to be explored to facilitate the oversight of this data for External Examiners.

Tracking of Conditions and Recommendations from Independent Evaluation of Programmes

The College is proud of its centralised approach to ensuring that the conditions and recommendations of panels are centrally captured, tracked and analysed. There are, of course, opportunities to ensure a sustained approach and to ensure that the 'institutional memory' is maintained. It is likely the case that this is something that needs to be re-issued across Programme Teams, with opportunities for discussion around which issues remain relevant and should continue to inform programme design and delivery, and which may be obsolete.

Conclusion

Programme monitoring and review is multi-layered and ongoing, as set out above. The formal processes are key, but monitoring and review take place through all the activities and feedback mechanisms in the College, however small or large. There are always opportunities for improvement. It is important to properly plan for time and capacity for the statutory Programme Review and Revalidation process with QQI, but also that the mechanisms which feed into this, such as all annual and cyclical reporting, are maintained as robust processes.

Areas for Improvement
1. Plan robustly for statutory Programme Review and Revalidation and ensure appropriate resources are allocated.
2. Carry out further analysis of conditions and recommendations arising from Independent Evaluations of Programmes since the last cycle, and identify themes and actions arising.
3. Conduct a review of all self-evaluation and monitoring processes to ensure continued coherence and that reports are fit for purpose, while removing duplication of reporting and ensuring that feedback loops are closed.

Other Reviews – Preparation for Delegated Authority and QCI Focused Review

Description

In addition to the standard monitoring set out above, DBS underwent two one-off reviews in the period between 2021 and 2023.

The first of these was an internal process of the College's own design that aimed to ensure the carrying out of groundwork for an application for Delegated Authority (DA) from QCI.

The process was overseen by a Steering Committee comprising senior stakeholders in the College, members of the DBS Board of Directors, including the Chair and the Independent Chair of the Academic Board. The Committee met quarterly to monitor progress. A smaller working group comprising the Registrar, Assistant Registrar, faculty members and others convened weekly or bi-weekly to complete work on mapping and gathering information and evidence. All members of the Senior Leadership Team and managers from various areas contributed to the process.

The DBS self-evaluation process for DA commenced in March 2021 with a high-level gap analysis against the QCI (2016) *Procedures and Criteria Relating to Delegation of Authority*, initially carried out by the DA Working Group. Evidence was marked red/amber/green according to how readily it could be identified against the Criteria. Following this initial gap analysis, a narrative document was created based on the Criteria. The aim of this document was to gather information and evidence against each area.

Arising from and in parallel to this work, it was agreed by the DA Steering Committee to commission a separate independent review of all departments in the College as they relate to non-academic matters, and it was from this that the review by consulting company BDO set out in Chapter 1 was carried out.

On completion of the above work, a 40,000-word report was compiled based on the QCI Criteria. A panel of external experts was assembled to carry out a review through a 'mock panel' event. Every effort was made to ensure that the profile of the panel included senior roles with extensive experience of quality assurance and a broad spread of expertise. The panellists' backgrounds were as follows:

- Former president of an Institute of Technology, experienced in carrying out institutional reviews internationally
- Assistant professor from an Irish university
- Assistant registrar from an Institute of Technology
- Provost of a UK University
- Chief operating officer of an Irish multinational finance company.

A site visit was held over two days on 21 and 22 May 2022. To give a sense of the depth of review, the sessions covered are set out in Table 8. The meetings were attended by representatives from across the College.

Table 8 Internal review site visit schedule

Day 1	Day 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Session 1: Meeting with Senior Management Mission, goals, Strategic Plan, DA Review process ● Session 2: Governance Functioning of Board of Directors and Academic Board ● Session 3: Financial Governance and Resourcing ● Session 4: Marketing and Admissions Learner recruitment, public information, partners ● Session 5: Student Experience ● Session 6: Student Representatives ● Session 7: Facilities, Premises and IT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Session 1: Programme Development and Delivery Programme development and approval processes, Teaching and Learning, Assessment, Learner Supports ● Session 2: Assessment, Awards and Quality Assurance ● Session 3: Faculty Resourcing ● Session 4: Academic Development and Supports ● Feedback to Senior Leadership Team and DA Working Group

Following this review, the panel made several recommendations, albeit noting that the findings arose from an internal DBS process. There was no 'official' outcome with respect to any QQI process. The recommendations were as follows:

- The documentation would benefit from including further consideration of all implications of achieving DA and how DBS will address them. Consideration needs to be given in the documentation as to how the relationship with QQI will change if DA is achieved.
- Details of the (then) proposed Audit and Risk Committee, including its role and how it will be integrated into Board reporting, should be included in the documentation.
- The focus and strategy for new programme development should be set out.
- For the review of boards and committees initiated through the Academic Board, a comprehensive mapping process should be undertaken between the current committee structures and revised ones to ensure that nothing is omitted in the changeover. The proposed seven committees still appear to have significant overlap, with scope remaining for reduction.
- The commitment to and evidence of action around Equality, Diversity and Inclusion should be articulated.
- Greater academic oversight of admissions decisions needs to be evident to ensure no conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest arises between the sales and marketing and admissions functions.
- Opportunities for review and reflection should be built into annual activities for staff across all levels and areas.
- Consideration should be given regarding the implications of Delegated Authority for the provision of programmes which do not currently lead to QQI awards.
- DBS would benefit from the development and dissemination of an institute-wide approach to assessment timeliness and quality of feedback.
- The Applied Research Strategy is commendable in many ways, but its impact on teaching and learning should be considered. The College needs to address research and scholarly activity and to provide clarity around its ambition in this area and a strategy for achieving its goals.
- The approach to staff continuous professional development (CPD) needs to be further highlighted in the documentation.

- Student supports and the student voice should be fully articulated in the documentation.
- The multimodal delivery model, which is a good one, should be closely monitored to ensure that it meets the programme learning outcomes and expectations of the student experience.

Following completion of the mock panel process, DBS intended to set out a project plan to address the recommendations arising and continue the work towards DA, with a view to being ready to apply as soon as QQI processes were established and it was possible from a legal perspective. However, following the events relating to the College's Social Care programmes over the summer of 2022, QQI initiated the Focused Review process discussed in Chapter 1, and the College was required to pivot its attention to the preparation of evidence and documents for this. This process commenced in December 2022, with a site visit in March 2023 and a subsequent panel report, DBS response and action plan. The final report was published by QQI in September 2023.

Evaluation

While the exercise in preparation for DA had a specific purpose of attaining this goal for the College, DBS viewed the process as an opportunity to engage in critical self-analysis, with the benefit of feedback from a team of highly qualified independent experts as part of a process of continuous improvement. The fact that so many individuals across the College were involved in the preparation and the site visit raised awareness and engagement around governance, quality assurance and strategy.

From the recommendations above, a number of actions were already in train at the time or have been addressed in the period since then:

- Changes in the reporting structure of the Admissions Department, with the Admissions Quality Assurance Officer(s) now reporting directly to the Registrar, and a dotted line from the Admissions Manager to the Registrar
- The new Strategy for Learning, Teaching and Assessment Enhancement and associated Action Plan
- The new research strategy, Research, Innovation and Enterprise (RIPE)
- Updated policies and procedures relating to marking and moderation and a new marking rubric.

Additionally, while the QQI Focused Review was a statutory process with a formal outcome and actions arising, DBS also viewed the process as an opportunity for development and improvement. The Implementation Plan created in response and submitted to QQI is reviewed regularly at Senior Leadership Team and Academic Board meetings to ensure progress towards meeting all commitments set out in the plan.

Conclusion

At the time of writing this report, DBS is between completing all items arising from the Focused Review and returning its attention to its eventual application for Delegated Authority. The outstanding actions arising from the Focused Review will be completed within the next couple of months.

Areas for Improvement

1. All recommendations arising from the QQI Focused Review to be completed by May 2024.
2. All recommendations arising from the internal DBS mock panel for Delegated Authority to be reviewed and a revised project plan to be initiated, aligning with outcomes from the Institutional Review process.

Oversight, Monitoring and Review of Relationships with External/ Third Parties and Other Collaborative Partners

Description

DBS engages with many parties, from relatively simple partnerships to more complex ones. For this section of the Review process we are focusing on transnational award and collaboration award relationships, as well as partnerships with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) with whom we have an articulation arrangement.

The College has three formal transnational award arrangements in place. The longest-standing arrangement is with Kolej Poly-Tech MARA (KPTM) in Malaysia, where the BA (Hons) in Accounting and Finance has been running since 2014. More recently, we have a partnership, now in its second academic year, with EU Business School (EUBS) in Munich for the delivery of the BA (Hons) in Business and the MBA. In 2023, final approval from the local Ministry of Education was received for a transnational partnership with the University of New York in Prague in the Czech Republic for the delivery of two MSc programmes.

The College has one local collaborative award partnership, with Sound Training College (STC) in Dublin. In partnership with STC we deliver Level 6 and Level 8 programmes in sound production and related subjects.

We are also currently in discussion with other potential partners about future collaborations.

Before we enter into a formal agreement with a partner, if the arrangement involves Programme Validation, we follow a structured process that ultimately leads to the validation approval of the transnational relationship. For example, Table 9 shows a briefing we have provided to a potential partner outlining to them the formal process.

Table 9 Programme Validation potential partner briefing

Step	Timeline
1. Informal discussion with Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) to inform them of a forthcoming transnational validation	January 2024
2. Complete due diligence	March 2024
3. Signing of transnational agreement between partner and DBS	Spring 2024
4. Preparation of submission documents to QQI for [Programme Name]	June–Sept 2024
5. Sign-off by internal DBS programme approval process	September 2024
6. Formal submission of application and documents to QQI	October 2024
7. Visit by DBS to partner to prepare for panel meeting	Nov/Dec 2024
8. Initial questions back from QQI	December 2024
9. Scheduled QQI panel meeting in partner’s premises	End January 2025
10. Report from panel	End February 2025
11. Response to panel and submission of final documents to QQI	End March 2025
12. QQI Programmes and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC) meeting for formal approval	April 2025
13. Programme starts delivery at partner’s premises	September 2025

To drive this process to a successful outcome, DBS will appoint a project manager who will be the partner's main point of contact during the process, leading and guiding them as appropriate. Others from DBS become involved in the process at the appropriate point (e.g. the Registrar's Office, Academic Directors).

Exercising due diligence is critical in determining the suitability of any potential partner. The due diligence template we use is based on that available from QQI and seeks information on the history and background of the HEI, its educational ethos, current provision and enrolments, regulatory context, QA system, teaching and learning, legal standing and financial standing. The partner HEI provides this information to DBS. We review this and seek clarification or evidence as required. Once we are satisfied with the information provided, we move on to the transnational agreement. For new partners, we provide them with a sample due diligence template created from existing documents we have previously reviewed. This due diligence template is available as Document ISER 17 in the associated confidential information folder. The due diligence then forms part of the documentation submitted to QQI for validation approval.

The existence of the formal partnership between DBS and another HEI, transnational or collaborative, is made known to applicants, students and staff at both institutions. For example, the KPTM website clearly sets out that the BA (Hons) in Accounting and Finance is a DBS programme, awarded by QQI (see Appendix 16), and the [STC programmes](#) are clearly shown as a collaboration between both DBS and STC. Similarly, the current transnational partnership between DBS and EU Business School in Munich is described on the [EUBS website](#) on the programme-specific pages.

For the transnational and collaborative partnerships, a very structured QA system exists. For example, at KPTM, the following measures are in place:

- A DBS Director of Studies is on site in Malaysia, operating from the partner's campus. He is a member of the DBS Academic Board.
- DBS teaching staff from Dublin teach in Malaysia each year.
- Assessments used by the partner in Malaysia are written by the relevant DBS lecturer in Dublin, with moderation provided by the lecturer in Malaysia.
- The same External Examiner is used for assessments done in both Dublin and Malaysia, and the same Exam Board ratifies results of students in both locations.
- The DBS President or Registrar officiates at the graduation in Malaysia each year.

A similar set of arrangements operate for the collaboration arrangements with STC, without the need for a dedicated Director of Studies.

We have 96 live articulation arrangements in place with partner HEIs where their students transfer to DBS to complete their studies.

As part of Strategic Objective 7 in the *DBS Strategic Plan* to develop a strong international ethos and build further on our international reach and reputation, DBS has, over recent years, actively pursued partnerships with universities and colleges internationally. The articulation agreements that DBS currently has in place range from Study Abroad semester agreements to direct entry through the recognition of prior learning (RPL) process into Years 2 or 3 of our full-time degrees. DBS also offers a Level 6 Certificate in Global Business (30 ECTS) to partner colleges. The most popular agreements are in the business, finance and marketing disciplines. The majority of these are with HEIs in Europe (mainly France, Germany and Spain), but we also have some articulation agreements with institutions in other countries. Table 10 shows the breakdown of these articulation agreements and their geographical location.

Table 10 Articulation agreements by country

Country	Number of agreements
Belgium	3
Brazil	1
France	22
Germany	42
Hungary	1
Italy	4
Malaysia	2
Spain	17
Sweden	1
Switzerland	1
USA	2

Due diligence is carried out on all partner institutions by ensuring, firstly, they are recognised in their geographical region. NARIC⁹ is also used to ensure an institution is recognised in its home country. Other criteria that are considered include the programmes they offer, alignment with DBS missions and values, cultural fit, accreditation status and any other international partnerships they hold.

Once we have identified that the partner institution is deemed suitable, DBS establishes a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) agreement outlining the terms, responsibilities and expectations of the partnership. The MoU clearly highlights the scope of collaboration, roles and responsibilities of each partner, intellectual property rights, financial arrangements and any legal considerations. This is then signed by both parties.

In addition, all partner institutions have an assigned partner manager who provides regular communication, reviews progress, identifies any issues or concerns, and addresses them proactively. Partnerships are monitored and evaluated, and DBS regularly seeks feedback from partners and their students to assess the outcomes and to deal with any issues. DBS also conducts dedicated review meetings at the end of each semester with some partners. These meetings typically include partner managers, the Head of Department for Arts and Study Abroad, and staff from the partner institution.

DBS also participates in international Erasmus initiatives and holds an Erasmus+ Charter for Higher Education. Participating in Erasmus+ has been good for raising the profile of DBS from a European partner perspective and has facilitated joint projects and some staff mobility from partner institutions.

A working group has been established to investigate the idea of faculty either coming from partner colleges to teach in DBS for a week, or DBS faculty going to other colleges to teach for a week through the Erasmus staff mobility project. The group is looking at this option from a faculty CPD perspective.

⁹ National Academic Recognition Information Centre. NARIC Ireland provides advice on the academic recognition of a foreign qualification.

DBS received funding in 2023 for outbound travel to four places, and we have applied for 2024 funding. We have received three visiting professors as part of the Erasmus contractual agreement to date.

Evaluation

As previously mentioned, the transnational arrangements with KPTM in Malaysia have been in place since 2014, during which time the programme has gone through the Revalidation process twice. For the most recent Revalidation, we undertook a review of how the arrangements are working. That review is available in Document ISER 19 in the associated confidential information folder. The report reviewed the arrangements under six headings: Financial, Academic, Student Rates, Faculty, Operations and Reputation. Using a red/amber/green system, four of the criteria were green and two amber: faculty and operations. The reason the faculty criterion was amber is because a developmental pathway for KPTM staff needs to be put in place, and Dublin faculty need to be more responsive to KPTM colleagues. The operations issues were mainly to do with the mobilisation of the new student information system.

The STC programme is also currently in a Revalidation cycle, as part of which a review of the DBS–STC relationship was also undertaken. The review is available in Document ISER 20 in the associated confidential information folder. This review also assessed the relationship under the same six headings, again resulting in two amber and four green. The two amber criteria were Financial and Faculty. The financial concern was caused by lower numbers during COVID-19 that impacted on the viability of the programme, though that has since stabilised. The faculty matter raised related to one member of the faculty who had performance issues, which were being dealt with.

Enhancing communication channels between DBS and partner institutions will facilitate more efficient information sharing, problem solving and collaboration. This could involve establishing regular communications such as meetings, workshops or online forums for partner institutions to exchange ideas and best practices. The weekly Real-Time EdTech Support, with Quality Guidance (RESq) emails managed by the Registrar's Office, as set out earlier in this document, include the key points of contact within the transnational and collaborative partners, but this recurring mini-update and other College-wide alerts are nevertheless channelled through these stakeholders. Increasing the number of touch points to ensure that DBS stays front of mind will not only improve relationships but also potentially increase student numbers.

Conclusion

We believe our management of partnerships and collaboration with partners is strong. There are systems in place to assess the capability and capacity of a partner before we enter into an agreement with them. Our monitoring of the effectiveness of the partnership and the assurance of the quality of delivery by the partner works well. We tend to take a long-term view of such partnerships and, therefore, nurture and support them to grow and develop. We have never had any issue of major substance arise with a partner, which we believe is a positive indicator of how well these partnerships work.

The DBS Strategy includes seeking more transnational and domestic collaboration partnerships to leverage the large volume of high-quality content that has been developed and validated in recent years.

Areas for Improvement

1. A closer alignment of Dublin faculty with partner institutions' faculty will assist in teaching delivery and assessment of students. It will also assist in the ongoing development of faculty in both DBS and the partner Higher Education Institution.

Conclusion

The Institutional Review was a challenging process for DBS in terms of the volume of work required, thus far, in the preparation of the Institutional Profile and this Institutional Self-Evaluation Report. It also challenged the way we think, as we needed to reflect and evaluate, not just describe and report.

The Institutional Review is a process that is required of every Higher Education Institution (HEI), but we also recognise its importance and its value to the College. Although DBS is a private HEI which has to generate all its own revenue and, therefore, make commercial decisions as well as academic ones, its overall reputation will stand or fall on its academic reputation. It is important, therefore, that the underpinning quality of the HEI provision is evaluated and assured, both internally and independently.

DBS wants to be a high-quality HEI, and while it is easy to state this as a goal, its achievement can only be proven with an objective, external process. For DBS, the Institutional Review process has enabled us to answer the question as to what good quality looks like for a HEI. The process has required us to set out our strategy, our capacity to deliver on this strategy, our organisational and academic governance that underpins our corporate fitness, and the system that enables and assures our compliance and our quality enhancement. All of this ultimately produces an engaging learning experience and the right outcome for every student, with the acquisition of skills and attributes that will endure and contribute to many aspects of their working and personal life. We believe we are a high-quality HEI. We have the necessary management, systems and resource capacity in place although we recognise there are many areas for improvement, some identified by us during this process and others that will be identified by the review panel.

Running a HEI is very demanding. It operates in a continuous cycle from student intake, through teaching and assessment to progression and ultimately to graduation. For DBS, intakes in September, January and late spring mean that there are multiple cycles running simultaneously. Because of this it is easy to get sucked into the demands of the cycle and the operational needs of running the College. The Institutional Review process enables the leaders of DBS to be leaders, appropriately reflecting on and considering the things we do and how we do them. It has enabled us to identify improvements in a structured way that records them, places them on a continuous enhancement plan and requires us to act accordingly. It enables the Academic Board and the Governance Board to oversee how the Executive assures quality and implements enhancement.

The Institutional Review process reached across the whole College; an additional benefit of the process was the common purpose it gave to everyone in DBS. All members of the Senior Leadership Team actively participated, and many people across the organisation have volunteered to be part of the process so far, with others waiting to be involved in the next phase as we prepare for the panel visit in summer 2024.

The leadership of DBS wishes to thank the large number of College employees who participated in the process, contributing to the enthusiasm that was generated around opening up the College to external review.

We also thank the Tertiary Education Monitoring and Review unit at QQI for their professionalism and support during the process.

Appendices

Appendix 1. DBS Recruitment Policy

1. OVERVIEW

Dublin Business School is an Equal Opportunities Employer and is committed to recruiting and retaining staff of the highest calibre. We will ensure fair and equal opportunities for all potential and existing employees. This relates to gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, race, sexual orientation, membership of the Travelling Community and religious belief.

This recruitment policy outlines how DBS will recruit and select the best calibre candidates. Having a transparent recruitment policy will ensure that DBS adheres to a lawful process, that job descriptions reflect the needs of the business, and that candidates are assessed against consistent selection criteria.

Equality

The Equality Acts prohibit discrimination against a person on nine grounds. These are sex, marital and family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, religious belief, race (this includes colour, nationality and ethnic origin) and membership of the traveller community.

The Acts cover all stages of the recruitment and selection process from the wording of the job advertisement, the job description, the selection criteria, shortlisting, conduct of the interview, questions and comments made at interview, through to the final selection decision.

Responsibility

Staff and management involved in the recruitment and selection process are responsible for following the procedures that are outlined in this policy. The recruitment process and procedures will be monitored by the Human Resources team, who will also be responsible for ensuring that procedures are kept up-to-date and in line with current legislation and best practice.

To avoid a conflict of interest or an appearance of a conflict of interest, no employee may initiate or participate in, directly or indirectly, a decision involving the rehire, promotion, or management of a family member or someone with whom they have an intimate relationship.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

This policy specifies the procedures to be followed when hiring employees. It applies to all employees whether full-time, part-time, fixed-term, hourly-paid, temporary or permanent and the aim is to ensure consistent and fair treatment for all in the organisation.

1. Job Requisition

The hiring manager creates a job requisition in Workday, including a detailed job description, person specification and compensation. The job description will explain the role, including the main duties, and the person specification will describe the required qualifications and attributes of the ideal candidate.

Job Description

The job description should outline the following areas:

- the main purpose of the job and the context in which it exists
- the key areas of responsibility and accountabilities
- the reporting relationships
- the tasks and skills involved

In writing a job description, the following broad principles should be adhered to:

- the aim is to describe the principal tasks of the job
- specific conditions pertaining to the functions of the post should be clearly defined
- the job description should allow for flexibility in the allocation of new duties relevant to the core functions of the post. This will avoid potential issues such as demarcation and ensure the required level of flexibility amongst staff exists.
- the job description must not be discriminatory or make explicit or implicit reference to the age, gender or any other irrelevant characteristics of the position holder

Person specification

The person specification should outline the following areas:

- Skills, qualifications, knowledge, behaviour, competencies, attributes and experiences of the ideal candidate.

The job description may cover both the essential and desirable criteria.

Essential criteria are those that are critical for the satisfactory performance of the job. All applicants must meet all essential criteria to be considered for the next stage of the recruitment and selection process.

Desirable criteria are those, which enhance a person's capacity to do the job. They are usually not listed as essential because it is expected that they can be acquired once in employment.

2. Advertise (internally/externally)

After the job requisition is approved by the President and the compensation is approved by the Chief Financial Officer, the position is advertised internally and externally via Workday by the internal recruiter. Staff members are notified about internal vacancies through an all-staff email and the [DBS Careers](#). The job advertisement will include information on how candidates should apply via Workday.

Exceptions to the above can potentially occur if the vacant position is currently occupied by an existing staff member, and that staff member is deemed to be suitable to occupy that role on a permanent basis. This will be at the discretion of DBS Management. In addition, where DBS deems that the role is of a commercially sensitive nature it may mean the role may be recruited by a third party.

3. Shortlist

Shortlisting is the initial first stage in the recruitment process. It involves a review and evaluation of all the applications submitted by candidates and identifies those candidates who most closely meet the essential selection criteria established for the post.

4 Panel

The hiring manager is responsible for selecting the interview panel. The hiring manager should ensure that the panel is familiar with the job description and with interviewing. The panel should agree in advance the areas to be covered and the sequence of the questions. To ensure consistency and fairness all candidates should be asked the same questions based on the competencies, skills and experience set out in the job description and person specification. The panel should only ask questions relevant to evaluating an applicant's ability to fulfil the requirements of the job.

5. Interview

The internal recruiter will set up interviews with the chosen candidates at a time suitable for all members of the chosen interview panel. The panel will use competency based interview questions. Detailed notes from each interview are maintained to show how marks were allocated. Records of the shortlisting and the interview process are stored on the candidate's account on Workday. If a candidate feels that they may have been discriminated against, they can make a written complaint to the Internal Recruiter/Management. All information will be held in line with the Data Protection legislation. The internal recruiter is responsible for ensuring all candidates invited to an interview are eligible to work in Ireland.

6. Eligibility to Work in Ireland

The internal recruiter is responsible for confirming that the prospective candidate is eligible to work in Ireland. All candidates must answer the visa requirement question when applying for the role stating if a visa is required to work in Ireland. The Internal recruiter must obtain a copy of their visa which is saved to their file and the visa information is uploaded to Workday if the candidate is hired.

7. Selection

In addition to conducting interviews psychometric testing may be used for senior roles as and when required.

In selecting the right candidate for the role, DBS will consider both the interview questions and where applicable, the psychometric test results. The hiring manager will invite each panel member in turn to outline his or her evaluation of each candidate. Once all the feedback is collated, the hiring manager will consult with HR to make a recommendation.

It is DBS policy that all candidates for academic positions are presented to the Academic Appointments Sub-Committee (AASC) for endorsement prior to an offer and contract being issued. The committee reviews qualifications, CVs and interview notes of successful candidates and will make recommendations based on the candidates' qualifications and professional and academic experience. The College may seek verification of any qualifications or prior experience, where it is deemed appropriate due to apparent inconsistencies or irregularities on the candidates submitted documentation. Once the AASC endorses the candidate, a certificate is issued and sent to the HR department. Failure by the applicant to submit the relevant documentation to support their credentials, may lead to an unsuccessful appointment. The Head of Teaching Delivery and Content Production and the Academic Dean have the discretion to approve short-term hires to ensure that the business needs are met. However we must ensure that the individual goes through the AASC and this happens in all cases, to ensure they are qualified to teach at a particular level or subject area.

It is the hiring manager's responsibility to extend the offer verbally to the successful candidate. The internal recruiter contacts unsuccessful candidates via an email sent through Workday.

8. Offer Letter

The internal recruiter will issue an offer letter to the successful candidate via Workday for signing.

9. Reference Checks

The candidate is required to provide details of two referees via Workday. Should the prospective employee have worked for 5 years or more in their most recent employment, one reference will be sufficient. It is the responsibility of the internal recruiter to carry out the reference check.

10. Contract Signing and Onboarding

The internal recruiter will issue a contract to the successful candidate via Workday; it will require two signatures: the hiring manager and the successful candidates. After the candidate signs the contract, the onboarding process will begin.

11. Confidentiality

It is important that all those involved in the selection and recruitment process treat all applications in strict confidence.

3. ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS

Not Applicable



Appendix 2.

DBS Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy

1. OVERVIEW

This policy applies to all Dublin Business School's (DBS) employees whether full-time, part-time, fixed-term, hourly-paid, temporary or permanent and the aim is to ensure consistent and fair treatment for all in the organisation.

DBS is fully committed to providing a good and harmonious working environment where everyone is treated equally and with respect and dignity. DBS' commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion brings many benefits to attracting, retaining and developing students and employees. We commit to creating a future in which anyone with the will and potential to succeed, regardless of their background, has the opportunity to transform their lives through accessing an outstanding learning experience at DBS. Championing diversity and equity in all our teaching and learning activities, including staff employment and advancement, forms part of this commitment to fairness, equality of opportunity and support of our employees and learners.

Our aim is that remuneration, general terms & conditions, recruitment, promotion, and retention will not be affected by irrelevant considerations and stereotyping. To ensure each person feels part of our community, DBS has underpinning values driving our culture: Act with Integrity, Empower and Support, Create Opportunity, Grow Knowledge and Drive Results Together. These values are supported by our DBS behaviours which can be accessed [here](#).

DBS is proudly committed to being an equal opportunities employer. Therefore, it is our policy that there will be no discrimination against or harassment of any employee, job applicant, visitor, contractor or learner either directly, indirectly or by association or perception, based on any of the nine protected grounds under The Equality Status Act 2000-2018:

- Gender
- Marital Status
- Family Status
- Sexual Orientation
- Religion
- Age
- Race
- Disability
- Members of the Travelling Community

This policy has been developed to:

- Ensure DBS fulfils its legal obligations
- Prevent and/or minimise the risk of any discrimination or unfair treatment to employees, job applicants, visitors, contractors or learners
- Increase awareness of minimum acceptable standards amongst employers, job applicants, visitors, contractors and learners
- Promote positive attitudes and behaviours with regard to diversity, equity and inclusion for the health, well-being and benefit of employees, job applicants, visitors, contractors and learners

2. POLICY STATEMENT

Definition of diversity, equity and inclusion

Diversity is the principle of valuing and embracing the differences in people and retaining the benefits of a varied workforce that optimises people’s talents whatever their backgrounds. Diversity encompasses visible and non-visible individual differences. It can be seen in the makeup of the workforce in terms of gender, ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities by looking at access to management positions, job opportunities and general terms and conditions in the workplace.

Equity that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.

Inclusion is about embracing all people in a community irrespective of their background, characteristics or disability. The aim is to give equal access and opportunities and remove discrimination and intolerance.

Embedding diversity, equity and inclusion in our culture

DBS has adopted diversity, equity and inclusion as core values and set the key objectives of:

- Ensuring that all individuals who come into contact with DBS, whether as employees, students or in other capacities, are treated with dignity and respect
- Ensuring that the opportunities DBS provides for learning, personal development and employment are made available on a non-discriminatory basis
- Providing a safe, supportive and welcoming environment for employees, job applicants, visitors, contractors and learners

DBS seeks through all its policies and actions to be a genuinely inclusive organisation, and draws from this on good practice throughout the Irish Higher Education sector and in the wider economy. The objective is to integrate the principles of equal treatment and promotion of diversity into all aspects of Dublin Business School’s day-to-day life.

Shared values = Shared responsibilities

All DBS employees are required to work within the framework of this policy and assist the organisation in meeting its commitment to provide equal opportunities in employment and avoid unlawful discrimination. All forms of oppressive behaviour, bullying and harassment should be challenged at all times.

Employees are responsible for ensuring that:

- They refrain from taking discriminatory actions or decisions which are contrary to either the letter or spirit of this policy and, for those in management positions, that they ensure that those who report to them also comply with the policy
- They do not instruct, induce, or attempt to induce or pressurise others to act in breach of this policy
- They cooperate with any measures introduced to develop diversity, equity and inclusion
- They respect the sensitivities of others
- They promote positive attitudes, behaviours and values with regard to diversity equity and inclusion for the health, well-being and benefit of employees, job applicants, visitors, contractors and learners
- They share good and best practice which leads to continuous improvement through embedding diversion, equity and inclusion into all policies, strategies and procedures
- They make themselves aware of DBS’ Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy

DBS is responsible for ensuring that:

- A good example is set by treating all members of the DBS community with dignity and respect
- They take a leadership role in all aspects of diversity, equity and inclusion related matters
- Manage unacceptable behaviour in accordance with the relevant policies
- Due consideration is given to diversity and equity within their areas of responsibility e.g. policy development and decision making
- Employees, job applicants, visitors, contractors and learners are treated fairly across the nine grounds
- The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy is promoted

Breaches of this policy

Acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation against employees, job applicants, visitors, contractors or learners are disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under the organisation's disciplinary policy. Discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation may constitute gross misconduct and could lead to summary dismissal.

Suggestions, concerns and complaints

If you wish to make a suggestion or raise a concern informally, you are welcome to do so via your line manager, your senior leadership team member or to a member of the Human Resources department.

If you consider that you may have been unlawfully discriminated against, bullied or harassed, you may use DBS's grievance policy to make a formal complaint. Where such complaints may concern the normal line of supervision or management, employees should speak to a member of the Human Resources department. DBS will take any complaint seriously, will investigate them thoroughly and as a matter of priority, and will seek to resolve any grievance that it upholds.

You will not be penalised for raising a grievance, even if your grievance is not upheld, unless your complaint is untrue and made in bad faith. Where complaints are found to be malicious, they may be dealt with as misconduct under the disciplinary procedure. Any vexatious, malicious, trivial or excessively unreasonable complaint will not be heard under the Grievance Procedure. Any employee who feels unfairly treated as a result of raising a complaint should raise it as part of the original complaint and not as a new complaint wherever possible.

Seeking Advice and Guidance

For further advice and support on this policy, please contact a member of the HR team or email hr@dbs.ie

3. ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS

Not Applicable

Appendix 3. DBS Faculty and CPD Policy

1. OVERVIEW

DBS faculty are required to engage in training and professional development as per their contracts in order to fulfil their administrative and learning, teaching and assessment commitments. Mandatory administrative and technical training and teaching guidance is made available to faculty to complete

as part of their induction, orientation and probation. Mandatory training and CPD may also be required of faculty post probation, due to changing circumstances.

DBS is committed to supporting and acknowledging faculty who meet and go beyond contractual obligations to further their knowledge and skills, especially where those knowledge and skills are aligned to DBS's strategic plans and objectives.

A formalised mechanism to consistently support and reward training and CPD does not exist in DBS. The lack of such a mechanism means that DBS cannot manage the training and CPD of faculty in a way that is supportive of the organisation's goals. The deficit of a formal mechanism that is consistently applied also exposes the college to accusations of inappropriate and unfair treatment of faculty.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

Faculty are required under their contracts to engage in training and CPD to stay current with the knowledge in their discipline and enhance their teaching, learning and assessment practices. Under this policy, **DBS will recognise this effort by awarding points for engaging voluntarily in training and CPD.** The points are allocated using a self-reporting mechanism according to a defined scale that is adapted from the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning professional development framework. Training/CPD points will be taken into consideration for internal promotion, recruiting onto specific project work and during salary and annual performance reviews.

Faculty can also apply for funding from DBS to support training/CPD fees.

- Funding is available on a limited basis for up to 50% of fees for Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Bodies (PSRB) accredited programmes.
- Faculty are limited to one funding application per academic year.
- Faculty are required to apply for funding for each year of a training or CPD programme that exceeds one year.
- Only programmes not offered by DBS or the wider Kaplan organisation are eligible for funding support.
- Faculty will be required as part of the application process to link the funding directly to DBS strategic goals and their own personal development plans that emerge from the annual performance reviews.
- Funding will not be available to faculty who are undergoing performance improvement plans.
- Funding may be withdrawn as a result of performance issues and failed performance improvement plans.
- There will be a limit to funds available per academic year (September to August) and per discipline to fund CPD. This limit will be defined in each annual budget submission.
- Funding applications will be reviewed by the Registrar, Head of Teaching Delivery and Content Production and Academic Dean. Applications will be assessed against criteria approved by the Academic Board and the Senior Leadership Team.

Refunding funding should faculty leave DBS.

Faculty will be expected to repay all funding should they leave DBS before finishing the CPD/ training programme. If faculty should leave DBS within one year of completion of their funded course, they will be liable to pay a prorated amount of the overall course fee as follows;

- leaves within the first 3 months of the course completion – pays the full fee
- leaves within the first 4-6 months of the course completion – pays 3/4 of the fee
- leaves within the first 7-9 months of the course completion – pays half of the fee
- leaves within the first 10-12 months of the course completion – pays 1/4 of the fee

2.1. DEFINITIONS

Mandatory training

Training and CPD that is required in order for faculty to competently carry out their administrative and teaching duties is regarded by DBS as mandatory. Mandatory training can include but is not limited to:

- Uploading marks on to Moodle
- Uploading content on Moodle
- Operating the recording and streaming of classes
- Using TSM to retrieve student records and run class reports
- Compliance Training
- Teaching and assessing in accordance with quality standards.

3. ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS

Summary of Self Assessment of CPD

Appendix 4. New Faculty Pathway

New Faculty Pathway: from Interview to Six Month Review

Introduction

DBS strives to be an agile college, with an applied quality learning environment. New faculty, often with limited teaching experience, require an intense but manageable induction period if they are to provide a quality learning environment from the outset.

This proposal clarifies the actions required for new faculty to be able to “hit the ground running” by having a grounding in the DBS organisation, an understanding of the learning environment they are entering and an introduction to the operational practicalities of teaching at DBS.

The pathway is divided into four sections:

1. Before a new hire starts
2. The first two weeks before teaching
3. After teaching has started
4. Reporting

This pathway is proposed for all new faculty, regardless of experience, because even experienced faculty are new to DBS.

Before a new hire starts work

After the AASC approves a recommendation to hire a new faculty member, they:

- Receive an automated email from Workday and start their own onboarding. (HR)
- Are assigned a DBS email address. (IT)
- Provided a link to the HR on-demand package.

In the first two weeks before starting teaching:

- Meet with Faculty Manager who covers:
 - Confirm timetable
 - Probation form and date of 3 month meeting and 6 month meeting
 - Module pathway (to be completed before 6 month probation)
 - The importance of compliance training
 - Talk the lecturer through the process of how they get paid
 - In conjunction with the AD nominate a mentor/buddy
 - Inform new starter of the lecturer absence policy
 - Direct new starter to DBS policies
 - Arrange staff card
 - Campus tour
 - Expectations: outlines process of pathway and AASC sign off and 6mth review
- Complete the HR Package (HR)

- Meet with Academic Director who discusses:
 - Lecturer Handbook
 - QA Handbook
 - Learner Code of Conduct
 - Programme overview: how the module fits in the programme
 - Module Guide
 - Previous Moodle pages from last semester
 - How ECTS works
 - Preparing for a class
 - What to cover in first few classes
 - Walk through first class
 - Learning-centred practice
 - Assessment strategy
 - Second marking
 - Rubrics
 - Information and reporting fora: Programme Team meetings/Programme Boards/Board of Studies
 - Student feedback
 - The assigning and introduction of a buddy
- Meet with the Learning Unit who cover off the following (two sessions required):
 - How to use Moodle appropriately
 - How to use teaching tools: Zoom/Panopto
 - Direct to asynchronous T&L content on the Training and Development page on Moodle.
- Arrange Library induction
- Arrange meeting with SESU
- Arrange Exams induction

New faculty starts lecturing

Buddy meets the new staff member in the first and second week, makes themselves available to answer questions on such topics as:

- Understanding of the module descriptor and
- Supports for teaching IT/Library/SESU/Learning Unit
- Writing assessments and exams
- Marking
- Moderation
- Communicating with learners
- Learning and Teaching Methodology
- Differentiation in classroom
- Understanding your cohort
- Difference in teaching levels
- Part time learners versus full time learners
- Cultural differences in cohorts
- Invitation to Programme Team meetings.

Reporting

The Faculty Manager and Course Director sign off a pre-teaching checklist with the new faculty member.

A three-month progress report is signed off by the Faculty Manager and Course Director and reported to the Head of Academic Programmes and Head of Faculty Operations.

The Faculty Manager notifies the AASC after six months of the new faculty members probation meeting.

Implementation

The New Faculty Pathway came into effect in January 2021. Faculty Managers retain overall responsibility for managing the pathway and ensuring all steps are taken prior to teaching.

This new faculty pathway will likely be challenging to implement, and may require early revision during implementation. It is proposed, therefore, that the implementation of the pathway is a standing item agenda at the Academic Heads meeting from January. It is also proposed that a three month review of the implementation of the pathway be on the agenda for the March SLT.

Appendix 5. Annual Academic Appointments Sub-Committee Report, 2022/23

Purpose of this Document

This document provides an update on the Academic Appointment Sub-Committee's endorsements in Dublin Business School, for ratification of academic appointments.

Academic Appointment Sub-Committee Function

The Academic Appointment Sub-Committee (AASC) reviews qualifications and professional experience of proposed academic staff appointments, including lecturers, tutors and external examiners, and approve as appropriate where found suitable. Academic appointments are **Endorsed** by the Academic Appointment Sub-Committee, and **Ratified** by the Academic Board.

Endorsed Academic Appointments Overview

See Original Report, ISER 24, in the associated confidential folder, for a table reflecting 125 academic appointments made in the academic year 2022/23 and also 19 academic appointments made so far in the academic year 2023/24. The total of 125 academic appointments is significantly higher than most preceding years, including 2020/21 academic year, which was partly inflated with the validation of the transnational agreement with European Business School in Munich.

Table 11 Breakdown of AASC Endorsements over preceding Academic Years

Academic Year	Academic Appointments Endorsed
2014-15	69
2015-16	67
2016-17	34
2017-18	128
2018-19	88
2019-20	65
2020-21	108
2021-22	99
2022-23	125
2023-2024	[19]

Supervisory role appointments

Of the 125 Endorsements made in the academic year 2022/23, 58 appointments were either specifically for a supervisory role or a mix of both teaching/supervision role. Table 12 below shows students/supervisors number for the selected few cycles. In the latest Oct-Jan cycle, the supervisor/student ratio was 1 to 6.6, which is a slight improvement from the Jun-Aug cycle where the ratio was 1 to 7.4. There has also been a significant decrease in the number of supervisors allocated a maximum allowed number of students.

Table 12 Allocation of supervisors per number of students

Period	Total students	Total supervisors	5-10 allocated	10+ allocated	Max allocated
Oct-Jan 2023	803	121	61	16	15
June-Aug 2023	721	97	45	22	26
Feb-May 2023	333	88	24	0	8
Sept 2022-Jan 2023	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
June-Aug 2022	432	80	48	2	12
Feb-May 2022	240	60	23	0	7
Sept 2021-Jan 2022	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
June-Aug 2021	372	63	41	4	14
Feb-May 2021	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
Sept 2020-Jan 2021	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
June-Aug 2020	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
Feb-May 2020	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
Sept 2019-Jan 2020	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
June-Aug 2019	424	67	34	8	20

NFQ vs non-Framework Endorsements

Of the 125 Endorsements made in the academic year 2022/23, 114 have been on NFQ programmes (91.2%, which is a slight increase from 89.7% in 21/22), and 11 on non-NFQ programmes (8.8%), limited to Professional School (1) and Study Abroad (10) programmes.

Transnational and Collaborative Partner Academic Endorsements

Malaysia – BA (Hons) in Accounting & Finance

Of the 125 Endorsements made in the academic year 2022/23, 7 (5.6%) have been for the Malaysian delivery of the **BA (Hons) in Accounting and Finance**. This is a minimal increase from the 5.2% of 2021/22, but still a significant reduction from the 18.5% of appointments in 2019/20.

EUBS Munich – MBA; BA (Hons) in Business

Of the 125 Endorsements made in the academic year 2022/23, 8 (6.4%) have been for the Munich-based delivery of the **BA (Hons) in Business**, and **MBA** programmes. This is a significant reduction from 15.5% in 21/22 and from the initial 48.15% of appointments in 2020/21, when a full complement of faculty for both programmes were required.

Kaplan International – ISEG English Language programme

8 new candidates have been endorsed to teach on Kaplan International programmes in the academic year 2022/23 which represents 6.4% of all endorsements in that period, compared with 6.0% in 2021/22.

Sound Training College – Sound Engineering and Audio Production

The partnership with Sound Training College commenced in 2018 with the validation of the three programmes: **Certificate** and **Higher Certificate in Arts in Sound Engineering**, and the **BA (Hons) in Audio Production and Music Project Management**. In the academic year 2022/23, there have been two appointments endorsed for those programmes (1.6%).

Shenyang University – BSc (Hons) in Computing

With the commencement of this partnership arrangement, two Contractor Faculty were nominated in 2021/22. In 2022/23 one of them had duties extended which was treated as a new nomination. A breakdown of appointments in Transnational and Collaborative partnership programmes are set out in Table 13.

Table 13 Breakdown of Appointments in Transnational and Collaborative Programmes.

Academic Year	Numbers of Academic Appointments Endorsed				
	Malaysian-based	Munich-based	KI English Language	Sound Training College	Shenyang University
2014-15	11	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2015-16	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2016-17	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2017-18	15	N/A	N/A	6	N/A
2018-19	25 ¹⁰	N/A	N/A	3	N/A
2019-20	13	N/A	N/A	5	N/A
2020-21	5	52	N/A	1	N/A
2021-22	6	17	7	5	2
2022-23	7	8	8	2	1*
2023-24	[0]	[3]	[0]	[1]	[0]

*1 Shenyang University appointment was in fact an extension to duties but due to the partnership aspect it was treated as a new nomination rather than an extension.

¹⁰ Introduction of capstone project on the undergraduate programmes, requiring supervisors.

Endorsements by Award Level

30.4% (38 of 125) of endorsed candidates had the ‘ideal’ profile in 22/23, that is, an academic major award of at least Level 9 on the NFQ with teaching experience (requiring no additional supports). This is a slight increase compared with 27.6% in 2021/22 but still a significant decrease from 46.3% in 2020/21.

26.3% (10 of 38) of this ‘ideal’ profile were international academics associated with the transnational or partnership delivery of programmes in Malaysia (4), Munich (3), Shenyang University (1), or by KI (2).

67.25% (84 of 125) of candidates endorsed in 2022/23 had conditions attached to the appointment which is an increase from 50.9% in 2021/22.

90.4% (113 of 125) of new appointments in 2022/23 had an academic qualification of Level 9 or greater. This is an increase compared with 82.8% in 2021/22.

99.2% (124 of 125) of 2022/23 appointments hold a major award on the Framework (or equivalent). This is an increase from 97.4% in 21/22.

Table 14 Breakdown of qualifications by Level of Endorsed appointments

TOTAL	2018-19		2019-20		2020-21		2021-22		2022-23		2023-24	
	88	%	65	%	108	%	98	%	125	%	[19]	%
Endorsed with Conditions	41	46.6%	37	56.9%	55	50.9%	49	50%	84	67.2	[9]	48.5%
Level 10	12	13.6%	13	20%	38	35.2%	17	17.3%	32	25.6%	[3]	15.7%
Level 9	69	78.4%	41	63.1%	64	59.3%	64	65.3%	82	65.6%	[13]	68.4%
Level 9 (prof. qual)	1	1.1%	1	1.5%	0	0%	0	0%	1	0.8%	[0]	[0%]
Level 8	5	5.7%	10	15.4%	5	4.6%	12	12.2%	7	5.6%	[2]	[10.5%]
Level 8 (prof. qual)	0	0%	1	1.5%	1	0.9%	1	1.0%	0	0%	[0]	[0%]
Level 7	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	4	4.1%	1	0.8%	[0]	[0%]
Level 6	1	1.1%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	0.8%	[1]	[5.2%]
No Major Award (Industry Experience)	1	1.1%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	0.8%	[0]	[0%]

Note: Candidates appointed with a Level 9 or Level 10 qualification underway are noted in Original Report, ISER 24, in the associated confidential folder, with square brackets around their qualification level to reflect it is ongoing. In Table 14, these are counted as the level below, i.e. a PhD in progress in Original Report, ISER 24, in the associated confidential folder is noted as '[10]', but is tallied as a Level 9 in Table 14, as the Level 10 has not been achieved yet.

AASC Reviews

The AASC ordinarily conducts a review of new endorsements 6-8 months after candidates have been approved. The last Review was conducted on 15 January 2024, for candidates approved between June and July 2023. The next review is scheduled for 04 March 2024 (August-September 2023 candidates).

External Examiner Appointments

Endorsed External Examiner Appointments

[Original Report] Appendix 2 is a table of External Examiner Appointments and Extensions approved for the academic period 2022-23 and also 2023-24 (as of 7 Feb 2024). In the 2022-23 Academic Year, 24 new External Examiner Appointments were approved which is an increase from 15 in the previous period. In 2023-24, there have already been 11 appointments made as of 7 Feb 2024. Out of all those 35 appointments, 24 are based in the Republic of Ireland, 10 in the UK and 1 in France.

Table 15 Breakdown of External Examiner Appointments by regional area

Academic Year	Republic of Ireland-based	UK-based	Other
2017-18	43	5	0
2018-19	49	4	1
2019-20	46	7	0
2020-21	50	7	0
2021-22	56	11	0
2022-23	66	18	1
2023-24	[51]	[19]	[0]

Appendix 6. Soft Skills Matrix Example

(from MSc in Marketing (draft in development, 2024))

Code:

B – Basic: Fundamental usage and guidance of the soft skills

A – Advanced: Application of the soft skills in a relevant scenario

C – Comprehensively Assessed: Assessed on the application or usage of soft skills

Module	Cognitive	Communication	Heterogeneity	Team-work	Skills Development
Consumer Behaviour and Neuromarketing	A	C	C	B	C
Sustainable Marketing Practices	A	A	C	A	A
Web Marketing Management and Metrics	A	A	B	B	C
Global Marketing	A	A	B	A	A
Strategic Brand Management	A	C	C	C	C
Finance for Marketers	A	C	B	B	C
Integrated Marketing Communications	A	A	C	A	A
Conducting Research for Marketing	A	B	B	B	B
Dissertation (elective Capstone option)	A	C	B	B	C
Placement (elective Capstone option)	A	A	A	A	A

Appendix 7. Sample of External Examiner Feedback

Timestamp	External Examiner	Module Title:	Comments on Exam Paper (First Sitting):	Recommendations on Exam Paper (First Sitting):	Comments on Exam Paper (Repeat Sitting):	Recommendations on Exam Paper (Repeat Sitting):	Additional comments or suggestions:
04/10/2022	Extern 29	Management	Good mix of questions, succinct. Topics well assessed.	Typos in Q3: capital letter "D" and "classifications"	Looks quite different to first sitting	Marks for Q5, Q6 not clear. Q4 – 6.25mks/bullet?	Overall very good, Repeat seems a little rushed
11/10/2022	Extern 7	Aviation Finance and Financial Statement Analysis	N/A	N/A	A lot of the questions seem to be standard corporate finance type questions with no specific aviation finance nuances e.g. how to decide between buy, borrow or lease an aircraft. The programme handbook states that "learners will utilise the financial statements to analyse the financial performance of a commercial airline as part of the overall evaluation of a proposed aircraft leasing contract." The only financial statements included in exam paper are not those of an airline! The financial analysis question is very general and not aviation specific.	Page 2 is blank and also page 12. Inconsistent font sizes. Question 6 contains some inconsistencies. The accounts are for 2021 and 2020, there is a heading in the accounts that states "Balance Sheet as at 21st December 2019", this needs to be amended. The question under the accounts states "You have been asked to evaluate the performance of M&S PLC for 2020 and 2019.", this should read 2021 and 2020.	Going forward I recommend tailoring the questions to be more relevant to the aviation industry such as lease pricing or how an airline would price a bond or loan off a competitors yield curve. In terms of financial analysis the focus should be on actual airline accounts, which have some major differences to ordinary corporate accounts especially in relation to the impact of leases and fuel hedging.
19/10/2022	Extern 5	International Management Practice	Generally I am happy with the questions, though there are a couple of minor points that I think need to be addressed (please see the recommendations below).	Questions 1, 2, 5 and 6 are statements/commands, but they all end with a question mark. I recommend that either the question marks are removed, or the statements are re-phrased as questions. Question 2 currently states "The theory and practice of leadership has shifted and changed over the last ten years, explain what factors brought about this change?". Presumably 'brough' should be 'brought'? Question 6 currently states "Discuss in detail Michael Porters five forces the impact and benefits to an organisation in assessing a business opportunity?". There appears to be a word or two missing in this sentence (e.g. "Discuss in detail Michael Porter's five forces, in relation to the impact and benefits to an organisation in assessing a business opportunity.")	Again, I am generally happy with the questions, though there is just one specific point, which I outline in the recommendations below.	Questions 1, 5 and 6 are statements/commands, but they all end with a question mark. I recommend that either the question marks are removed, or the statements are re-phrased as questions.	No further comments.

Timestamp	External Examiner	Module Title:	Comments on Exam Paper (First Sitting):	Recommendations on Exam Paper (First Sitting):	Comments on Exam Paper (Repeat Sitting):	Recommendations on Exam Paper (Repeat Sitting):	Additional comments or suggestions:
24/10/2022	Extern 43	Employee Relations and the Law	<p>Good variety of questions and examples of their relevance to everyday contexts. Scenarios are practical portrayals of key concepts that strike an appropriate balance between signposting the student, and forcing them to engage in abstraction, application, and contextualisation.</p> <p>There is a clear division of marks for various parts of the answer to each question, and the examiner has clearly laid out how marks will be awarded. The candidate has been given plenty of scope to score marks for answers that allow multiple interpretations or approaches.</p>	<p>Small typo on pg. 10: "and were absence from work for long periods" – should be absent</p>	<p>As above. Questions on the repeat exam strike an appropriate balance between problem-based and essay-style questions.</p>	N/A	N/A
24/10/2022	Extern 43	Legal Systems	<p>This is a well-written exam that is more than appropriate for the cohort being examined. An impressively detailed marking scheme has been provided, and it covers the various ways in which students can score marks under these broad essay-style questions. I commend the inclusion of a problem question as well, as skills/system-based modules tend to focus on assessing the recollection of knowledge and the mere description of frameworks/ systems. The inclusion of a problem-question forces the student to engage in abstraction and conceptualisation of existing knowledge, which I wholeheartedly commend as a more authentic assessment of learning.</p>	N/A.	<p>As above. In addition, I commend the addition of several problem questions in the repeat exam. Perhaps they could be more evenly spread across both papers, as I note the May exam only has one problem question – just a suggestion, I defer completely to the examiner's discretion in this regard. I also commend the addition of a miscellaneous question in Q.6, which addresses several aspects of the course and obliges the candidate to answer all parts!</p>	N/A	N/A

Timestamp	External Examiner	Module Title:	Comments on Exam Paper (First Sitting):	Recommendations on Exam Paper (First Sitting):	Comments on Exam Paper (Repeat Sitting):	Recommendations on Exam Paper (Repeat Sitting):	Additional comments or suggestions:
24/10/2022	Extern 43	Contract Law	This is a well-written exam that is more than appropriate for the cohort being examined. As in previous years, I am struck by the detail evident in the problem questions presented here. Scenarios are practical portrayals of key concepts that strike an appropriate balance between signposting the student, and forcing them to engage in abstraction, application, and contextualisation. Questions also feature multiple parts and strike an appropriate balance between problem-based and essay-style questions. There is a clear division of marks for various parts of the answer to each question, and the examiner has clearly laid out how marks will be awarded. This offers the candidate plenty of scope to score marks for answers that allow multiple interpretations or approaches.	N/A	As above.	N/A.	N/A.
25/10/2022	Extern 39	Global issues for management	Questions are appropriate and have been clearly outlined with supporting answers. There could be more details for the answers for further marking guidance. Also question 3 infers that a trade war would be devastating for everyone when it could be beneficial for a country/region.	Further details for answers	questions are appropriate	Further details for answers so that there is a clear marking scheme	
25/10/2022	Extern 39	MBA General, HRM	Questions are appropriate and cover a wide range of topics from the MBA. check spelling and grammar throughout, e.g. question 1 answer has spelling mistake	check spelling and grammar throughout,	Questions are appropriate and cover a wide range of topics from the MBA	NONE	

Timestamp	External Examiner	Module Title:	Comments on Exam Paper (First Sitting):	Recommendations on Exam Paper (First Sitting):	Comments on Exam Paper (Repeat Sitting):	Recommendations on Exam Paper (Repeat Sitting):	Additional comments or suggestions:
02/11/2022	Extern 14	Organisational Behaviour	A well set exam paper	Final proof read to be undertaken as a few typographical errors	A well set exam paper	Final proof read to be undertaken as a few typographical errors	
03/11/2022	Extern 36	Psychology through the lifespan	These look fine but external examiner is listed as Conor McGuckin	Looks like a good range of options	Also not me listed as external examiner :-)	Question 3 might ask them to outline Piaget's stages before asking about parental advice	
04/11/2022	Extern 21	Human Capital Management and Org. Behaviour	Some typing errors. Please revise Q1,Q3,Q4 Q5. Critically & Analyze.	Please revise the typing and grammatical errors on the paper.	Some typing and grammatical errors	Please revise grammatical and typing errors. Delete? question mark for Q3 & 4. Q5 rephrase as explain is too descriptive for this level. Suggest replace with critically assess,	
08/11/2022	Extern 11	Behaviour Science	Good range of topics in the questions. Questions are clearly worded. There is clear scope for differentiation between levels based on these questions. Question 3 offers 2 options, not sure why this is subdivided? Does it effectively give a choice of 6 options rather than 5?	None	This provides an equivalent paper to the first sitting and will ensure that students are neither advantaged or disadvantaged by needing to sit the repeat option.	None	
08/11/2022	Extern 37	Operating Systems and Networks	Good paper, questions clear and precise.	Section 2, question 4a – put comma in sentence after word model – a) In relation to the OSI reference model, explain the difference between MAC address and Internet Protocol (IP) address.	N/A	N/A	Solutions are detailed
10/11/2022	Extern 24	Jurisprudence	A very minor issue concerns the formatting. Some questions appear in bold while other do not. I would have some concerns about Question 4. This question does not mention John Austin directly but the guidance provided clearly expects students to focus on his theory. It is worth noting that the command theory of law was not unique to Austin (e.g. Jeremy Bentham had one too).	Fix format and revise Question 4 to make it clear that the question relates to Austin's theory.	Same issues with formatting. The guidance for Question 1 does not refer to the use of natural law by the Irish courts. It may be that this is not covered in the course but it has obvious relevance to the question.	Fix formatting.	None

Timestamp	External Examiner	Module Title:	Comments on Exam Paper (First Sitting):	Recommendations on Exam Paper (First Sitting):	Comments on Exam Paper (Repeat Sitting):	Recommendations on Exam Paper (Repeat Sitting):	Additional comments or suggestions:
10/11/2022	Extern 35	Public and Community Health	A nice range of options. Very clear instructions including what a good answer would involve.	N/A	N/A	N/A	
10/11/2022	Extern 20	Digital Marketing Concepts	Question 4 requires students to distinguish Gens Y and Z. In the solutions, technology is presented as a key differentiator. While I agree that it is, I find the presentation of the older generation not having that much technology an issue. As it is a GenY and GenZ comparison, I assume this is referring to Gen Y? However, both are often referred to as digital natives, with GenZ referred to as 'true' digital natives.	Solutions should be reviewed based on the above comment.	Q3a asks students to differentiate between social media and social networks. The solutions detail that social media refers to content while social networks refer to platforms. This may be confusing for students given that the terms can be employed in differing ways. As an example, Q3b asks learners to discuss the honeycomb principle. Kietzmann et al. refer to social media in the context of social media platforms in literature.	Review question 3a.	
14/11/2022	Extern 25	Graph & AI	No comments	Some of the diagrams contain text which may be hard to read when printed (e.g. Q3 white text, small font, on light blue background)	No comments	e of the diagrams contain text which may be hard to read when printed	
14/11/2022	Extern 37	Databases Design & Development	Fair questions	The words member, trainer etc should not start with a capital letter. In question one, there is a lot of capital letters used where they should not. Consider justifying the paragraph. Throughout the questions – certain letters i.e. b,c,d are in bold and others are not. This might be confusing for the student. These are small editing changes. Delete the additional last blank page.	Fair but maybe question 5 a little easy as multiple choice. I would suggest a similar question to the previous question.	Question 5, maybe consider a long question instead of multiple choice. Delete the additional blank page 2.	

Timestamp	External Examiner	Module Title:	Comments on Exam Paper (First Sitting):	Recommendations on Exam Paper (First Sitting):	Comments on Exam Paper (Repeat Sitting):	Recommendations on Exam Paper (Repeat Sitting):	Additional comments or suggestions:
15/11/2022	Extern 43	Corporate Law & Governance	Good variety of questions that strike an appropriate balance between problem-based and essay-style questions, and feature multiple parts in some cases. I consider the level of the questions posed to be appropriate for the cohort concerned	N/A	As above.	N/A	The marking schemes provided significant detail on the substantive content that the examiner expects to be discussed by candidates, and the key concepts/cases that need to be treated. I appreciated the references to how strong/good students will be distinguished from students who receive lower grades, as referenced in the solutions for Question 1 in the summer exam and Questions 1, 2, 5, and 7 in the supplemental exam. Though I imagine I will be able to observe the distinction between the different grade brackets come exam season, it would be helpful if the examiner could add a line or two to the marking schemes that notes the distinction between a First Class answer, a 2.1 answer, and so on, as standard practice.

Appendix 8. SLATE Action Plan

Introduction

The SLATE 2 Action Plan builds on the goals and objectives of SLATE 2 to include specific actions under each objective, with accompanying outcomes, mechanisms to measure, deadlines and roles responsible for ensuring the actions are met.

The Academic Management teams, including the Academic Directors, Learning Unit, Learning Analytics Manager and SESU; the senior leadership team and the Learning and Teaching Committee were invited to comment, add to and provide feedback on the plan.

The Action Plan is a live document, subject to ongoing change over the course of the three years of SLATE 2. To that end, it is recommended that the plan is reviewed and updated quarterly, according to the review schedule (Appendix A) with stakeholders and that the review is considered by the SLT.

Goal: A measurable engaging transformative learning experience that ensures our graduates are prepared for employment.

Objective: Increase learner engagement with industry leaders and experts.

Actions: Further utilise and develop partnerships with industry leaders and innovative companies to provide opportunities for learners and faculty to engage with real-world scenarios and develop relevant skills, competencies and profiles via guest lectures, industry visits, networking events and other related activities.

Tasks	Outcome	Measure	Deadline	Owner
Add industry advisory profiles to student and college websites.	Students are more aware of the industry experts advising DBS in their discipline.	Academic Dean signs off on the presence of profiles on dbs.student.ie.	Sept 2024	Academic Dean
Increase the number of industry speaker events per programme to at least 10% of all contact time.	Learners are guaranteed contact with industry experts as part of the teaching experience.	Monitor industry expert speaker time per programme and report in annual programme report.	Sept 2026	ADs/HoD
Review the Industry Advisory Boards' ToRs to include more student engagement in their remit.	Students get more contact with members of the Industry Advisory Board.	Updated advisory board ToRs.	June 2024	ADs/HoD

Goal: A measurable engaging transformative learning experience that ensures our graduates are prepared for employment.

Objective: Embed the skills and competencies that are relevant to learners’ personal and professional goals.

Actions: Map the identified graduate attributes to programme and module learning outcomes.

Design programmes, modules and micro-credentials for learners that address the specific skills, capabilities and competencies required for the (future) world of work.

Tasks	Outcome	Measure	Deadline	Owner
Include mapping of graduate attributes in programme documents at a programme and module level.	Knowledge of the extent to which the MIMLOs are covering the transversal skills identified as graduate attributes.	The mapping is included in a section of the review and/or revalidation documentation.	June 2024	AD/HoD
Introduce a mechanism for assessing and scoring the industry relevance of the teaching delivery on a programme.	A documented understanding of the industry relevance of the delivery of each programme.	Include industry relevance section in programme annual reports.	Dec 2024	ADs/HoD

Goal: A measurable engaging transformative learning experience that ensures our graduates are prepared for employment.

Objective: Provide a variety of suitable assessment and feedback methods that are transparent, authentic and developmental.

Actions: Increase the number of assessments with tangible outputs of learning and other expressions of personal achievement.

Review assessment rubrics for alignment with graduate attributes and grading criteria.

Increase the frequency and suitability of feedback provided to learners throughout their relationship with the institution.

Tasks	Outcome	Measure	Deadline	Owner
Engage all faculty in the module pathway.	All faculty have grounding in basic skills and techniques in delivering a module.	FMs record all faculty have engaged with the module pathway.	Jan 2025	LU/FMs
Review grade rubrics against MIMLOs.	The rating of learner performance is guided by their attainment of the learning outcomes.	ADs sign off on review per discipline.	June 2025	ADs/HoD LU
Prioritise authentic assessment in the review of programmes.	Revalidated programmes contain substantial authentic assessments.	LU scores each programme on variety and authenticity of assessment before the revalidated programme submitted to QQI.	Dec 2023	LU
Increase the number of cross module assessments.	Learners have a greater appreciation of the applicability of assessment beyond their individual modules.	Increased number of cross assessments on programmes.	Jun 2026	ADs/HoD

Goal: A measurable engaging transformative learning experience that ensures our graduates are prepared for employment.

Objective: Facilitate learners in bringing their prior experiences into the learning process and connecting it with the new knowledge being gained.

Actions: Actively manage learner expectations on the challenges and the engagement required to meet those challenges.

Equip faculty through CPD with an understanding of how to maintain a learning experience that meets DBS defined quality standards for teaching.

Tasks	Outcome	Measure	Deadline	Owner
Engage all faculty in the module pathway.	Faculty are more aware of the value of peer-to-peer experiential learning.	FMs record all faculty have engaged with the module pathway.	Jan 2025	FMs/LU
Teaching plans include more activities that facilitate peer-to-peer experiential learning.	Learners get more opportunities to share their experiences.	Oversight of delivery includes reviewing teaching plans for peer-to-peer experiential learning.	June 2025	ADs/HoD LU
The peer-to-peer experiential learning experience is promoted on the web site to prospective learners.	Learners' expectations about the learning experience in DBS and the level of peer-to-peer experiential engagement required are managed.	LU signs off on the "What is learning like at DBS" page.	Apr 2024	LU/ Marketing Manager

Goal: A measurable engaging transformative learning experience that ensures our graduates are prepared for employment.

Objective: Improve the quality, currency and accessibility of teaching content.

Actions: Ensure all teaching content and delivery is in line with principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

Equip faculty through CPD with an understanding of how to maintain a learning experience that meets DBS defined quality standards for teaching.

Devise and implement tools for assessing the quality of teaching delivery.

Tasks	Outcome	Measure	Deadline	Owner
Engage all faculty in the module pathway.	Faculty are aware of UDL principles.	FMs record all faculty have engaged with the module pathway.	Jan 2025	LU/FMs
Review module content against UDL principles.	All teaching content is approved against UDL principles.	State of content's compliance with UDL principles are reported on in programme reports.	Dec 2025	ADs/HoD LU
Create a 'Using the Library Resources' course for faculty.	Faculty are able to effectively share existing Library resources via Moodle.	Number of faculty interactions with Library resources increases by over 50%.	Dec 2024	LU/ Library

Goal: A measurable engaging transformative learning experience that ensures our graduates are prepared for employment.

Objective: Challenge learners to think critically and engage in discussions and debates with their peers and other relevant stakeholders.

Actions: Establish appropriate student-to-teacher ratios for types of learning to allow for more personalised attention and feedback.

Actively manage learner expectations on the challenges and the engagement required to meet those challenges.

Tasks	Outcome	Measure	Deadline	Owner
Review induction content and delivery to emphasise expectations of learner engagement.	Learners are more aware of the value of engagement and critical thinking.	Stats on learner engagement with Learning@DBS OnDemand content.	Sept 2024	LU/SESU
Engage all faculty in the module pathway.	Faculty are aware of the value of engaging learners.	FM record that all faculty have engaged with the module pathway .	Jan 2025	LU/FMs
Prioritise critical thinking and engagement in Learner Support.	Learners become more aware of the importance to learning of engagement and critical thinking.	Stats on learner engagement with supports promoting engagement and critical thinking.	June 2024	ASC
The critical engagement aspect of learning at DBS is promoted on the web site to prospective learners.	Learners' expectations about the level of engagement critical thinking required are managed.	LU signs off on the "What is learning like at DBS" page.	Apr 2024	LU/Marketing Manager

Goal: A measurable engaging transformative learning experience that ensures our graduates are prepared for employment.

Objective: Develop mechanisms to assess the extent to which the learning experience is active, peer-led, experiential and reflective.

Actions: Devise and implement tools for assessing the quality of teaching delivery.

Tasks	Outcome	Measure	Deadline	Owner
Engage all faculty in the module pathway.	Faculty are aware of the value of active, peer-led, experiential and reflective learners.	FMs record all faculty have engaged with the module pathway.	Jan 2025	LU/FMs
Extend oversight of academic delivery to include meeting quality standards.	Academic Oversight audits include standards rating.	Record of the audits.	June 2025	ADs/HoD LU
Devise an annual benchmark of the DBS learning environment against two similar sized and orientated colleges.	DBS is more aware of how its learning experience ranks beside similar sized colleges.	The benchmark included in the Learning Review.	June 2025	Academic Dean/ Registrar

Goal: A learning environment that learners can immerse themselves in totally anytime and anywhere.

Objective: Increase flexibility of delivery in all programmes through programme review and development.

Actions: Devise programme development plans to create more flexible programmes that will facilitate learners to devise personalised learning paths.
Review DBS capacity to deliver programmes and services against QQI Quality Assurance Guidelines on Blended, Hybrid and Online Learning.

Tasks	Outcome	Measure	Deadline	Owner
Pilot the use of immersive technologies in the teaching environment in each discipline.	An awareness of the value of immersive technologies in each discipline.	An increase in the number of incidences of VR, AR, MR, Game Development, UX and UI in programme LT&A Strategies.	June 2025	ADs/Hod
Incorporate hyflex learning into all programme development and revalidation.	All programmes to offer some hyflex learning.	The number of programmes offering hyflex delivery exceeds 50% of programmes.	June 2026	ADs/HoD
Train all faculty in hyflex delivery.	All faculty are comfortable with hyflex delivery.	All faculty report that they are comfortable with hyflex delivery.	June 2024	Academic Dean
Satisfy the requirements of QQI Guidelines on Blended and Online Learning.	DBS can develop blended and online programmes with immersive technologies.	QQI validate DBS for blended and online learning.	June 2024	Registrar
Upgrade every classroom in DBS to facilitate hyflex delivery.	All classrooms that can accommodate more than ten students have zoom rooms installed.	Every classroom has the capacity for hyflex delivery.	Dec 2023	Academic Dean/ Head of IT

Goal: A learning environment that learners can immerse themselves in totally anytime and anywhere.

Objective: Provide mobile-friendly accessible learning content that is available anytime, anywhere.

Actions: Pilot immersive teaching techniques in each discipline.
Review DBS capacity to deliver programmes and services against QQI Quality Assurance Guidelines on Blended, Hybrid and Online Learning.

Tasks	Outcome	Measure	Deadline	Owner
Create guidance on teaching content and activities being mobile friendly.	Faculty have access to support on creating mobile-friendly content.	Guidance on content creation for mobile usage available on the LU Intranet page.	June 2024	LU
Review all existing, and future, education technologies, including moodle, for mobile accessibility.	Mobile-accessible educational technologies.	All educational technologies signed off as mobile accessible.	June 2024	LU
Introduce a mobile compliant aspect to the Learning Environment section on all programme documentation.	All programmes being developed or validated have to address the mobile aspect of teaching content and activities.	A check to ensure all programme documentation addresses the mobile question in the Learning Environment section.	June 2024	Programmes Manager
Extend oversight of academic delivery to include review of mobile accessible content and activities.	Academic Oversight audits include mobile accessible rating.	Academic Oversight Checklists.	June 2025	ADs/HoD LU

Goal: A learning environment that learners can immerse themselves in totally anytime and anywhere.				
<p>Objective: Create a genuinely immersive seamless virtual learning environment through utilising generative AI tools and immersive technologies.</p> <p>Actions: Pilot immersive teaching techniques in each discipline. Develop a mechanism to periodically benchmark the learning environment against competitors and internationally recognised standards.</p>				
Tasks	Outcome	Measure	Deadline	Owner
Review LMS and associated platforms for incorporation of immersive technologies and GenAI.	Capacity to incorporate immersive technologies and GenAI into LMS.	Available GenAI capacity added to Moodle.	June 2024	LU
Upgrade some labs to be able to facilitate the use of immersive technologies.	Capacity to use immersive technologies in teaching.	The creation of a Superlab.	Sept 2024	Academic Dean/ Facilities Manager/ Head of IT
Periodically benchmark the learning environment against competitors.	The ability to be able to review DBS inclusion of immersive technologies against competitors.	Include benchmarking in Annual reports and Learning Review.	June 2025	Academic Dean/ Registrar

Goal: A learning environment that learners can immerse themselves in totally anytime and anywhere.

Objective: Facilitate learners to define and develop their relationship with and within a flexible learning environment.

Actions: Pilot immersive teaching techniques in each discipline.

Tasks	Outcome	Measure	Deadline	Owner
Develop content to prepare prospective learners for what is expected of them in a flexible learning environment.	Increased Learner awareness of expectations of a flexible learning environment.	Availability of the support to manage flexible learning expectations. Student survey reporting preparedness.	Sept 2024	LU
Review admissions content against expectations of learning in a flexible environment.	Content on learner flexible expectations available to prospective learners.	Availability of the support to manage flexible learning expectations prior to accepting an offer.	June 2024	Admissions
Prioritise flexible learning techniques in learner support.	Learners have access to academic support on flexible learning.	Availability of the support on flexible learning in learner support.	June 2024	ASC

Goal: A learning environment that learners can immerse themselves in totally anytime and anywhere.

Objective: Facilitate the delivery of hyflex learning from all DBS locations.

Actions: Devise and implement a plan to transform DBS's virtual learning environment into an immersive learning environment.
Review DBS's physical learning environment to support hyflex and immersive teaching delivery.

Tasks	Outcome	Measure	Deadline	Owner
Install zoom rooms in all classrooms.	Hyflex teaching can be delivered from every classroom.	Working zoom rooms in every classroom.	Dec 2024	Academic Dean/ Head of IT
Review physical locations and choice of furniture for flexibility.	Clearly defined direction for classroom furniture replacement.	The existence of the plan to replace DBS classroom furniture.	June 2024	Academic Dean/ Facilities Manager/ Head of Academic Operations

Goal: A learning environment that learners can immerse themselves in totally anytime and anywhere.

Objective: Ensure all faculty have mastered hyflex, immersive teaching delivery that incorporates generative AI.

Actions: Continue to develop comprehensive training and CPD programmes for faculty and students on hyflex delivery, generative AI tools and immersive teaching technologies.

Tasks	Outcome	Measure	Deadline	Owner
Devise comprehensive training and support CPD for faculty on hyflex learning.	All faculty capable and comfortable delivering hyflex learning.	A record that all faculty have engaged with hyflex training and CPD.	June 2024	LU
Devise mechanisms and CPD for incorporating GenAI into teaching delivery.	Faculty have the capacity to utilise GenAI.	Faculty training plan as part of the GenAI incorporation plan.	Jan 2024	LU

Goal: Ecosystem of Learning

Objective: Develop a collaborative teaching and learning network that encompasses all areas of DBS

Actions: Create forums for staff who influence the touchpoints on the learner journey to exchange experiences, e.g. career readiness modules and digital badges.
 Ensure academic management teams regularly discuss efforts to enhance the learning environment with all areas of DBS.
 Review and assess current communication channels and processes for teaching delivery to ensure they are effective, efficient and supportive of collaboration across all stakeholders.

Tasks	Outcome	Measure	Deadline	Owner
Create working groups for faculty and non-teaching staff to exchange experiences on the learning journey.	Greater awareness of how each unit in DBS impacts the learning experience.	Meeting schedule.	Sept 2024	Head of Academic Operations
Academic oversight and enhancement initiatives to be reported on at managers' meeting.	Greater awareness of enhancement initiatives.	Academic Oversight included in the agenda for the manager's meeting.	Jan 2024	ADs/HoD
Create a forum for AD/HoD and marketing staff/ agents to discuss the promotion of programmes.	Increased alignment between the marketing and selling of programmes and the academic attributes of a programme.	Minutes of a semi-annual meeting of ADs/ marketing and sales staff.	June 2024	Academic Dean/CCO

Goal: Ecosystem of Learning

Objective: Support non-teaching staff and stakeholders' ability to impact the learning environment

Actions: Create forums for staff who influence the touchpoints on the learner journey to exchange experiences, e.g. career readiness modules and digital badges.
 Develop teaching and learning training and CPD opportunities that bring together faculty and non-teaching staff.
 Review and assess current communication channels and processes for teaching delivery to ensure they are effective, efficient and supportive of collaboration across all stakeholders.

Tasks	Outcome	Measure	Deadline	Owner
Develop teaching and learning training and CPD opportunities that bring together faculty and non-teaching staff.	A greater understanding of shared problems that impact the learning experience.	HR reports on training to include multiple incidences of faculty and non-faculty training.	Sept 2024	HR
Create and publicise internally a learner cradle-to-alumni pathway.	All DBS staff are aware of where they and their colleagues touch the learner journey.	Publicly available pathway that is updated to reflect organisational changes.	Dec 2024	ASC

Goal: Ecosystem of Learning

Objective: Create a culture of inclusive continuous teaching and learning improvement for all staff.

Actions: Define a “cradle-to-alumni” pathway identifying all the touchpoints of a learner journey.

Establish clear expectations and responsibilities for all stakeholders within the ecosystem, one that ensures alignment and accountability for achieving institutional goals.

Further develop the system for capturing and utilising feedback from all stakeholders, including learners, faculty, staff and partners, to improve processes, services, and outcomes.

Tasks	Outcome	Measure	Deadline	Owner
Create and publicise internally a learner cradle-to-alumni pathway.	All DBS staff are aware of where they and their colleagues touch the learner journey.	Publicly available pathway that is updated to reflect organisational changes.	Dec 2024	ASC
Create an online dashboard of learner feedback, supported by Power BI, that captures all learner feedback in one easily accessible place.	A close-to real time understanding of issues being raised by learners.	The functioning dashboard reported to the Academic Board.	June 2025	ASC

Goal: Ecosystem of Learning				
<p>Objective: Develop mechanisms to recognise and acknowledge good practice that enhances teaching and learning from all areas of the college.</p> <p>Actions: Foster partnerships and collaborations with other educational institutions Develop teaching and learning training and CPD opportunities that bring together faculty and non-teaching staff.</p>				
Tasks	Outcome	Measure	Deadline	Owner
Stage an annual celebration of teaching and assessment at DBS.	Greater recognition of positive teaching practice.	Staging the event.	Dec 2024	Academic Dean/ASC
Introduce a faculty teaching and learning excellence award for each discipline.	Greater recognition of good teaching practice.	Presenting the awards at the annual teaching event.	Sept 2024	Academic Dean/ASC
Introduce a points awarding mechanism for faculty engaging in CPD.	Faculty participation in CPD recognised.	Self-reporting of faculty CPD at performance reviews.	Jan 2024	ADWG/ Head of Teaching Delivery & Content Production
Re-engage with the National Forum on teaching and learning initiatives.	Greater integration with the LT&A community in Ireland.	Attendance by DBS National Forum reps at inter-HEI events and meetings reported to the LT Committee.	Jan 2024	ASC/LU
Each discipline has representatives at cross HEI forums. This may be facilitated through professional organisations, other national bodies or informally.	Increased connection with discipline-based LT&A initiatives in the sector.	Reporting on membership in Annual Programme reports.	Dec 2024	ADs/HoD

Goal: Ecosystem of Learning				
<p>Objective: Ensure that all staff work collectively to support the reliable and technical infrastructure required for a positive learning experience.</p> <p>Actions: Establish clear expectations and responsibilities for all stakeholders within the ecosystem, one that ensures alignment and accountability for achieving institutional goals.</p>				
Tasks	Outcome	Measure	Deadline	Owner
Creation of a pre-semester audit of classroom and educational technology.	Minimise technical issues in the classroom.	Audit signed off.	Sep 2023	Academic Dean/Head of IT
Create a self-assessment ready-to-use educational technology with additional training and support for faculty.	Minimise incidents of faculty not being able to utilise educational technology.	Completed self assessment/ attendance at training sessions.	Sept 2023	Academic Dean/Head of Teaching Delivery & Content Production
Develop a SoP that includes representation from learners, faculty and non-teaching staff on reviews of existing and potential future technologies.	Greater inclusivity in decisions on technology that influences the learning environment.	SoP in existence.	June 2024	Head of IT/ Academic Dean

Goal: Ecosystem of Learning				
<p>Objective: Enhance communication on teaching and learning issues throughout the college.</p> <p>Actions: Further develop the system for capturing and utilising feedback from all stakeholders, including learners, faculty, staff and partners, to improve processes, services, and outcomes.</p>				
Tasks	Outcome	Measure	Deadline	Owner
Add teaching narratives to the Staff Newsletter.	Greater awareness of teaching and learning issues.	Inclusion of a teaching section in the staff newsletter.	Dec 2023	ADs/ HoD/HR
Publish outcomes of board meetings in more accessible formats for all staff.	Greater awareness of teaching and learning issues.	Publish programme changes on the staff Intranet.	June 2024	Academic Dean
Annual survey of all non-teaching staff on teaching and assessment issues.	Greater input from non-teaching staff in the learning environment.	Results of the survey.	Sept 2024	Learning Analytics Manager

Review and Reporting Schedule

Progress report on SLATE 2 Action Plan by the Academic Dean to be a standing item on the agenda for the Learning and Teaching Committee, to be added to the standard reporting form filled in by the LU, Library and SU for each committee meeting.

Quarterly review for the Senior Leadership Team starting with the March 2024 meeting.

Annual reporting on progress to the Academic Board at its June meeting.

Annual reporting on progress to the Commercial Board at its summer meeting.

Appendix 9.

Key Academic Management Posts

Academic Directors are responsible for the medium- to long-term academic management and development of the discipline. They set the standards for programme delivery and ensure that they are being met, managed through the Assistant Academic Directors and Programme Level Managers. They report on the performance of the programme portfolio in their discipline. They are responsible for academic planning and the development of new programmes and the revalidation of existing programmes. They also drive research within their disciplines and engagement with learner and faculty support. The exception to this role is in the area of Arts, Language and Study Abroad, which is led by the Head of Department.

Assistant Academic Directors support the Academic Director in providing academic leadership in programme management, development and review, and work closely with Programme Teams in the delivery and of programmes to students. The role is focused around effective programme management and teaching, learning and assessment initiatives, implementation of programme development, review, and retention initiatives in the discipline area and supporting the discipline Academic Director in discipline development, enhancement and innovation, including opportunities for business development, employer-facing initiatives and improved graduate outcomes. The Assistant Academic Director role is a relatively new role that was put in place in 2022.

Programme Level Manager (PLM) is a new role, introduced in 2023. This replaced a previous role of Subject Matter Expert (SME), which was reviewed by the Academic Delivery Working Group. The role of SME was specific to a subject area or discipline and needed to include a student facing piece. The PLM role is now very student-focused, with responsibility for the day-to-day academic management of assigned programmes. PLMs are responsible for the academic delivery of the programme, including the programme and module learning and assessment strategies, the quality of learner feedback, teaching content, integrated learning across the programme modules, consistency of delivery and learner retention. All academic queries that cannot be addressed by faculty at a module level go to the PLM.

Within each discipline area, appointments have been made based on student numbers and specific requirements of the subject areas.

Work Placement Coordinator

The Work Placement Coordinator role was put in place in the areas of Business, Marketing & Law, Accounting & Finance, and Psychology, to manage the process for new elective placement options introduced on some Masters-level programmes. The role was created in recognition of the need to ensure that placements are appropriate and that the experience is fully aligned to the programme learning outcomes. The role liaises with the placement provider in order to ensure expectations are clear and all documentation is completed in advance as required. It also supports the student in linking in with companies which have expressed an interest in offering placements, and helping students prepare for placement. It is also the key point of contact for students during the placement, including managing any issues that may arise. The Placement Coordinator does not find placements for students, but does support them in doing so themselves.

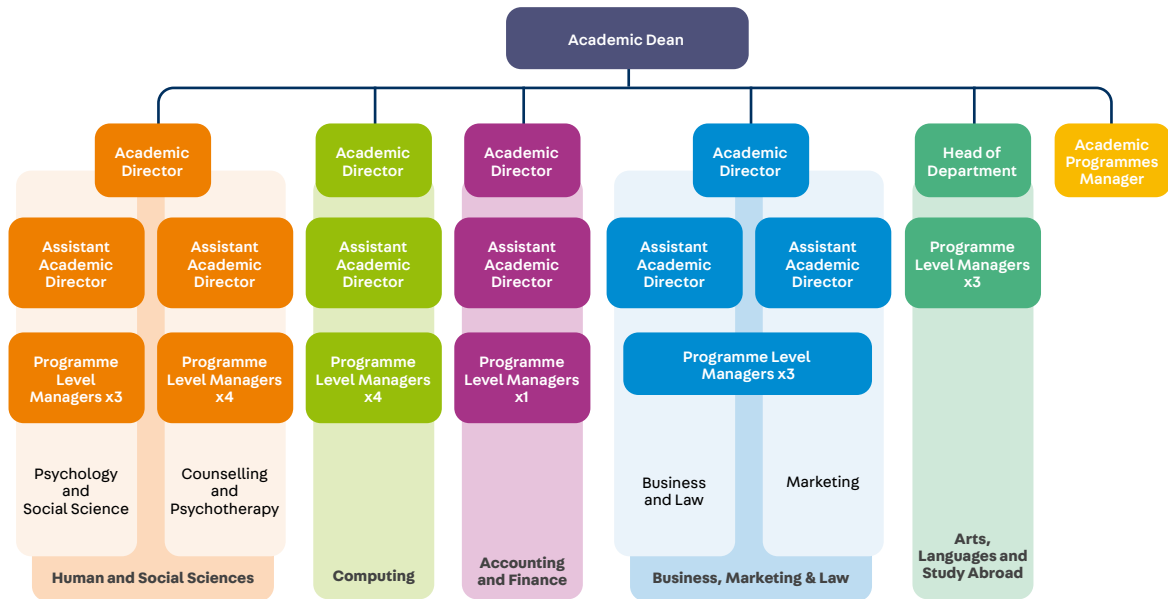


Figure 23 Structure of the Academic Dean’s Office

Learner Retention Officers

In 2023 the academic learner supports were also further strengthened. An additional 0.5 whole time equivalent role was created and the Student Support Officer roles and responsibilities updated. There is now a full-time Senior Student Support and Retention Officer role and a part-time Student Support and Retention Officer. These roles sit under the Academic Dean. Together with the SESU Team Lead, they form the Student Engagement and Success Unit, which is further discussed in Chapter 2.

Learning Unit

The Learning Unit (previously the EdTech Team), has been instrumental in supporting the evolution of teaching and learning for the College. They provide support and training mainly to the Lecturing Faculty, but also to other members of the learner support staff such as the Exams Office, Library and Academic Hub, Content Development Team, IT Service Desk, and Academic Operations. The Learning Unit is a team of three and comprises:

- Senior Education Developer
- Education Developer
- Learning Technologist

Its mission is to promote a culture of excellence, innovation and collaboration in teaching and learning. Its objectives are to:

- Enable rapid response to changes and developments in the field of education.
- Leverage educational technologies to provide an optimal learning experience tailored to diverse learner requirements, disciplines, and levels.
- Provide CPD opportunities informed by research and evidence-based practice.
- Develop competencies in learning and teaching in multimodal environments.
- Foster peer learning and recognise good practice through building a community of practice based on trust, integrity, and respect.
- Research new knowledge and skills to cultivate innovative, agile practice.

Appendix 10. Feedback from Lecturers on Classroom Technology

What is working well	What is not working well
<p>1. Lecturers are given a dedicated, secure DBS Zoom accounts for all synchronous modes of delivery, one-to-one student meetings, and any form of assessment such as presentations, orals or short interviews.</p>	<p>1. Some class disruption caused by issues with classroom technologies not working.</p>
<p>2. Ease of access for learners to virtual classes through Moodle links.</p>	<p>2. Different technologies in campus classrooms cause confusion when moving from one classroom to another; it can be difficult for faculty to adapt.</p>
<p>3. Automation of class recordings and ease of access on Moodle for learners.</p>	<p>3. Technical complexities to start classes.</p>
<p>4. Moodle LMS works well to provide course material and activities.</p>	<p>4. Network sometimes slow or dropping on campus.</p>
<p>5. The provision of Desktop PCs for lecturers in all classrooms and Surface laptops for remote or in-class on-campus delivery.</p>	<p>5. Inconsistent audio quality for hyflex classes.</p>
<p>6. The provision of Interactive Touchscreen Boards in many classrooms.</p>	<p>6. Class not recording or poor sound quality on recordings.</p>
<p>7. Fully fitted computer labs.</p>	<p>7. Moodle is difficult to navigate.</p>
<p>8. Provision of soundproof pods for online class delivery.</p>	<p>8. UDL/accessibility issues with current version of Moodle.</p>
<p>9. Enhanced audio and video in the majority of classrooms.</p>	<p>9. Issues with learner registration on Moodle.</p>
<p>10. Personal module profiles through Citrix VPN providing remote and local access.</p>	<p>10. Grading and annotation can be difficult and does not update from Moodle to TSM.</p>
	<p>11. Overall weighted grade shown in Moodle is incorrect.</p>
	<p>12. Large classes are difficult to engage in a hybrid or online environment.</p>
	<p>13. Preparation takes longer for online classes.</p>

On foot of feedback a set of improvement actions were identified, as follows:

- Review resources to ensure classrooms are tech-ready at all times.
- Improve signage and instructions for classroom usage.
- Implement compulsory training and regular refresh for all staff at the beginning of each term.
- Configure all classrooms to the same standard with enhanced Zoom audio and video and interactive boards.
- Improve network capacity to facilitate busy times.
- Implement faculty surveys to measure user experience during term time and action areas to address in real time.
- Review and enhance the quality of audio in all classrooms to ensure consistent experience for hyflex delivery.
- Review capacity of the Learning Unit and IT Services Desk support particularly for times when there is a high volume of tickets and training requests.
- Upgrade Moodle to a more accessible version to ensure UDL.
- Invest in a UX design for Moodle and other Faculty and Student websites.
- Add in accessibility plug-ins to Moodle for UDL compliance.
- Develop an accessibility statement.
- Increase use of EdTech tools such as VEVOX, Forums and Quizzes for online and hybrid large classes.

Appendix 11. Support and Resources Available to Staff

Title	Description	Evaluation/ Output	Measurement mechanisms
New Faculty Pathway	Onboarding for new lecturing Faculty to prepare for teaching and learning in DBS; includes Moodle LMS, multimodal delivery, logins, Library learning resources. 170 staff have completed the Pathway.	Feedback surveys.	Review Survey.
Module Pathway	Module Pathway Badge provides New Faculty with the knowledge and skills to achieve the DBS Quality Standards for Teaching and Learning. 159 Badges have been issued across all 6 lessons.	Badges Feedback Survey Peer Observation Reflection Quiz.	Survey.
Classroom Technologies Competence Training	Live Competence Training for Faculty to learn how to use all technologies required for teaching and learning in the Physical and Virtual Classroom. 50 Faculty completed.	Observation by IT Service and LU.	Competence Checklist.
Curriculum Planning	ABC Workshops planning to determine modes of delivery, assessment and sequence of topics. 88 Curriculum Planning sessions with Teaching Faculty, LU faculty, Content Development staff and Academic Director attending.	Trello Board visual storyboard of module plan.	Progression statistics Student survey.
Ask Me Anything (AMA)	Drop-in one-to-one support and training with LU.	Observation in training. Application in T&L.	Attendance record.
RESq (Accessed from Staff Calendar)	Drop-in support online for Faculty. Weekly themes in Teaching, Learning and Assessment aligned to demand and current events. Faculty from LU, Registrar, Quality Assurance, Academic Integrity and Assessment and Exams.	Observation. Application in T&L.	Attendance record.

Title	Description	Evaluation/ Output	Measurement mechanisms
Staff Intranet	Information and resources such as: HowTo videos, guides, blogs, workshop recordings across all areas of Teaching, Learning and Assessment.	Sitefinity does not collect data.	Data not available from Sitefinity at this time.
CPD On-demand Lessons. (hosted on Moodle)	Series of asynchronous lessons across Teaching, Learning and Assessment identified in feedback surveys, and other feedback channels.	Informal observation of Faculty. Application in T&L.	Moodle Activity Reports.
Lunch & Learn/ Workshop Series	Series of synchronous physical and hybrid workshops across Teaching, Learning and Assessment identified in feedback surveys, and other feedback channels.	Application in T&L.	Attendance record.
QQI	External e.g. QQI workshops, conferences.	None.	
Advance HE	Fellowship scheme. T&L resources and webinars.	Fellowship Award.	
National Forum Badges	Hosted internally in DBS and externally.	Badges.	Badge Record.
AHEAD/UDL	Hosted externally.	Badges.	Badge Record.
Erasmus+	Staff inbound and planned (at the time of writing the report) outbound mobilities via KA131.	Self-reflective report Application in T&L.	

Further explanation on other Faculty supports

Classroom Technologies Competencies



A Google form as shown in **Figure 24** below is distributed to all teaching Faculty prior to the start of the new academic year. The form serves as a self-assessed competency check in the classroom. It can be used with a colleague to have a peer assessed session, or with a member of the IT Support Team if required.

Classroom Checklist

Find an empty classroom for this assessment and work through each item in order, noting whether you were able to complete the step or not. If not please add a comment at the end of the section as to why you couldn't (for example because you weren't able to work it out, or there was an issue that prevented you from doing so).

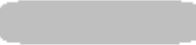
Further help can be found on [Classrooms page on the intranet](#)

At the end of each section you can write a comment (optional) on your answers/experience.

 @dbs.ie [Switch account](#) 

* Indicates required question

Email *

Record  @dbs.ie as the email to be included with my response

Indicate below if you are self-assessing yourself through this checklist, working with a partner or are having an assisted session (with a member of IT and/or Learning Unit)

Self-assessed

Peer assessed

Assisted

Other: _____

If peer assessed please enter the name of your partner:

Your answer _____


[Next](#)  Page 1 of 8 [Clear form](#)

Figure 24 Classroom Competency Check Form

Ask Me Anything (AMA)

AMA sessions with members of the Learning Unit are available to book via a Google Calendar booking page. Times vary from day to day to suit all teaching timetables.

Curriculum Planning

In DBS, learning is delivered across a 'spectrum' of blended learning and delivery modes. The 'blend' will use varying degrees of interaction between synchronous and asynchronous learning. Delivery modalities range from physical classroom 'live' with no online components to online only. The Curriculum Planning sessions enables programme and module teams as well as Content Development Team members to work together to develop a storyboard visualising the learner journey, including topics, activities and assessment for all delivery modalities. Figure 25 shows the user interface for a Curriculum Planning Session.

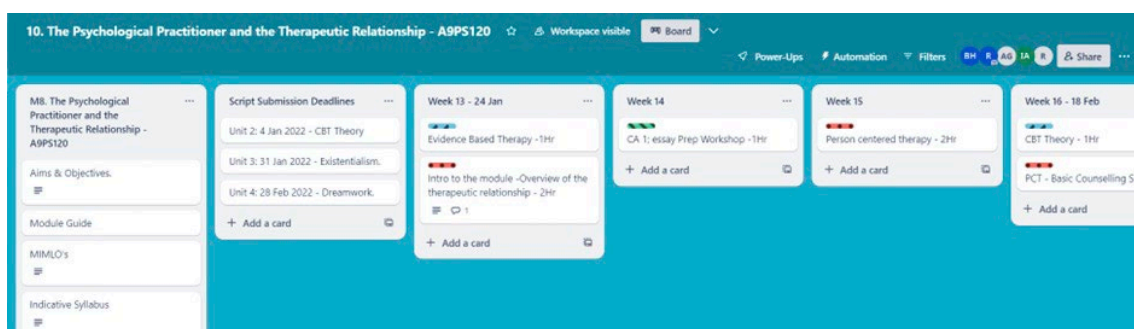


Figure 25 Curriculum Planning

RESq

As described in Chapter 1, RESq is a weekly drop-in session hosted by the Learning Unit, Assistant Registrar and Quality Assurance Officers, for faculty to raise any questions, whether it be about policy, EdTech, or the procedure to complete any tasks. These sessions are advertised through a weekly email to all faculty, key stakeholders in administrative departments, and transnational and collaborative partner stakeholders, along with brief updates regarding other developments or activities in the College, such as policy updates or institutional dates to remember, such as Exam Boards and graduation. These weekly sessions propose a 'theme' for discussion based on developments in the sector or related to the stage in the academic year, to attract attendance based on timely information or activities.

On-Demand CPD Content

Continuous personal development (CPD) is an important aspect of faculty professional growth in DBS. LU provide asynchronous lessons for lecturers to support their ongoing learning in key areas throughout the process of the review as follows:

- Marking and Grading
- Moderation
- Assessment and Feedback
- Copyright

Lunch & Learn Workshops

The Learning Unit has created a series of workshops that are delivered live online throughout the year as a 'Lunch & Learn' for staff and faculty. A recording of the workshop, along with links to the resources used are shared on a dedicated page on the staff intranet, as the screenshot in Figure 26 demonstrates.

LU Workshops



Vevox @ DBS Workshops & Resources

First training session is being held on **Wednesday 17 January at 2pm.**

After this date you can view the recording, slides and resources used for this workshop here:

[Vevox Workshop and Resources page resource page](#)



DBS Grade Criteria Workshop

This workshop was held on Friday 10 November 2023

You can view the recording, slides and resources used for this workshop here:

[Grade Criteria Workshop resource page](#)



Quality Standards in Learning & Teaching

Our first workshop was held on 8th December 2022. The LU team presented on the DBS Quality Standards rubric that they had recently launched. This was an interactive workshop with breakout discussions and exercises for participants.

The next scheduled workshop is: TBC

[Click here to go to the resource page for this workshop.](#)



Quizzes for Assessment

The first of these workshops was held on 17th February. A recording of the presentation, slides and resources are available on the resource page for this workshop.

The next workshop is scheduled for: TBC

[Click here to go to the resource page for this workshop.](#)

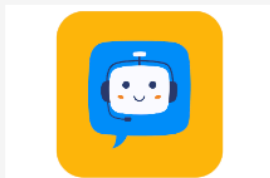


Academic Integrity for Faculty

The next scheduled workshop is: 24 March 2023 at 1pm. Location: [LU Training Room](#)

Look out for the event on the [DBS Events calendar](#).

[Click here to go to the resource page for this workshop.](#)



Assistive Technology

We are currently developing this workshop - watch this space!

Look out for the event on the [DBS Events calendar](#).

[Click here to go to the resource page for this workshop.](#)

Figure 26 Learning Unit Workshops

Appendix 12. Programmes with Experiential Content or Work Elements

Programme	Stage	Mandatory/ Elective	ECTS	PSRB
BA (Hons) in Counselling & Psychotherapy	Year 3-4	Mandatory	Multiple modules/ ongoing requirement	IACP
MA in Psychotherapy	Year 1-2	Mandatory	Multiple modules/ ongoing requirement	IAHIP
MA in Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy	Year 1 Semester 2, Year 2 Semester 1 & 2	Mandatory	Multiple modules/ ongoing requirement	APPI
MSc in Applied Psychology	100 hours	Elective	30	
MSc in Health Psychology	100 hours	Elective	30	
MA in Addiction Studies	10 visits	Mandatory	10	
HDip in Science in Computing	10-12 weeks	Elective	10	
HDip in Science in Data Analytics	10-12 weeks	Elective	10	
BSc (Hons) in Computing	10-12 weeks	Mandatory	30	
MSc in Information & Library Management	3 weeks FT/ 90 hours PT	Mandatory	[Associated with 5 ECTS module]	LAI
MSc in Digital Marketing & Analytics	Minimum 150 hours	Elective	30	
MSc Supply Chain Management	Minimum 150 hours	Elective	30	
MSc in Financial Technology	Minimum 150 hours	Elective	30	

Appendix 13. Types of Work-Integrated Learning by Programme

For placements in the area of Human and Social Sciences, the types and requirements of these vary from programme to programme, as follows.

BA (Hons) Counselling and Psychotherapy, MA in Psychotherapy

Experiential elements are a requirement of these programmes for recognition by the professional bodies, as noted above. There are separate requirements for hours associated with experiential elements Process Group, Supervised Practice, Clinical Supervision as well as engaging in their own therapy throughout. The Supervised Practice, which is the client work, is monitored through the Clinical Supervision by a suitably qualified practitioner. The Practicum Coordinator is responsible for:

- Ensuring the placement personal psychotherapist is accredited and suitable to work within the DBS humanistic/integrative/psychodynamic training orientation
- The supervisors are appropriately qualified for this type of placement supervision
- Vetting of placements
- Contracting and communication between DBS, the student and the placement setting
- Liaising with the placement setting on issues concerning the placement or the student
- Facilitating a mechanism for feedback from Placement Centres to the Training Organisation on the student's participation and engagement during their time in the placement
- Oversees the collection and storage of insurance certificates
- Act as the first point of contact for the placement Director/Manager, initiating and maintaining contact via telephone and/or email and conducting placement visits where necessary
- Running the clinical induction Workshop for students
- Bringing to the attention of the Placement Director/Manager any concerns arising about a student's well-being, behaviour or engagement during the placement or any concerns or issues about a placement setting.

MA in Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy

The placement is organised by the Programme Leader who consults in advance with the Placement Supervisor, sending CV details in relation to the student and setting up an initial meeting between Placement Supervisor and student. From the second year on, the student takes responsibility for acquiring clients in a clinical setting previously vetted by DBS to carry out appointment based one-to-one sessions, in accordance with the assessment strategy for clinical work. In-house Group Supervision takes place weekly while a student is on placement and which is another forum for the student to talk about placement experiences and gain valuable feedback from both peer group and tutor.

MA in Addiction Studies

The Supervised Clinical Visits in the MA in Addiction Studies is a credit-bearing module, but the programme is not affiliated with any professional body. The module involves group visits off-campus to ten sites in Dublin city, which allow students to become acquainted with the work of addiction treatment centres and other related areas that deal with issues relating to addiction, such as the drug court and a prison. The visits are managed by the Module Leader who organises the group of learners to be met by staff and clients at the various venues. Learners are not involved in any clinical practice or evaluation of clients through these visits. Attendance at the visits is mandatory for completion of the award, through fulfilment of reflection assessments within the module's assessment strategy, and this is monitored by the Module Leader.

MSc in Applied Psychology & MSc in Health Psychology

The work-based learning in the MSc in Applied Psychology and MSc in Health Psychology programmes is an elective research placement. There is an assigned Placement Coordinator, and DBS prepares the student for the research placement by running a seminar programme, which covers:

- Research placement options
- Research placement provider expectations
- Facilitation of initial contact with potential research placements facilitated
- Guidance on completion of required documentation given (research placement providers will make an offer of employment during this phase)
- Support for production of a research proposal based on initial contacts with the agreed research placement
- College supervisor allotted
- Ethical approval for the proposed research with the research placement provider, along with feedback, provided prior to commencement of the research placement.

The placement requirements of DBS, the placement provider and the student are determined by signed declarations that are managed by the Placement Coordinator, which provides the student and the placement provider with relevant declaration documentation for each of their perspectives (research placement provider and student declaration forms), along with the research placement manual. The manual includes the Non-Disclosure Agreement, research placement monitoring meeting and performance review forms.

BA and BA (Hons) in Applied Social Care

As set out in Chapter 1, the College withdrew the delivery of its Level 7 and 8 Social Care programmes, following the withdrawal of the application for approval to CORU. This withdrawal was in part a result of feedback received by CORU regarding their evaluation of the work placement component. Key concerns were not with regards to the suitability or management of placements, but rather the credit weighting recognised for the hours undertaken in the programme documentation, and the degree of evidence provided to demonstrate constructive alignment of the achievement of the standards of proficiency. However, the hours of placement in the programme were as set out in the CORU requirements. Those requirements did not specify the volume of credits required.

Appendix 14. Complaints Data

Discipline	Academic Year							Potential Data Gap	Grand Total
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24		
Accounting & Finance	8	8	1	2			1		20
Arts, Languages and Study Abroad	1		1						2
Business, Marketing & Law - BUSINESS	12	14	4	5	3	4			42
Business, Marketing & Law - LAW	3					2			5
Business, Marketing & Law - MARKETING	4	4	1	1	1	3			14
Computing	5	3	9	1	2	2	2		24
Human & Social Sciences - PSYCHOLOGY	1	4	1	1	3	1	3		14
Human & Social Sciences - PSYCHOTHERAPY			2	1		4	3		10
Human & Social Sciences - Social Science		1		1		1			3
N/A		1				1			2
Potential Data Gap								1	1
Grand Total	34	35	19	12	9	18	9	1	137

The total number of Complaints received decreased noticeably after 2018/19, which may have been a result of the revision of the College's *Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH)* through the Re-engagement Process, with the related institutional refreshed approach to delivering services and supports for learners.

Complaints initiated (by Programme Type)

Programme Type	Academic Year							Potential Data Gap	Grand Total
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 (as of 7/3/2024)		
UG Arts	1	3	3	2	2	4	5		20
PG Arts		2	1	1	1	2			7
UG Business	12	9	5	5	2	4			37
PG Business	5	12	8	1	2	4	3		35
Professional School	13	1	1	1	1	1	1		19
Springboard/ ICT	3	7	1	2	1	2			16
Potential Data Gap								1	1
N/A		1				1			2
Grand Total	34	35	19	12	9	18	9	1	137
	Proportion of Total Complaints Initiated								Grand Total
UG Arts	2.9%	8.6%	15.8%	16.7%	22.2%	22.2%	55.6%		14.6%
PG Arts	0.0%	5.7%	5.3%	8.3%	11.1%	11.1%	0.0%		5.1%
UG Business	35.3%	25.7%	26.3%	41.7%	22.2%	22.2%	0.0%		27.0%
PG Business	14.7%	34.3%	42.1%	8.3%	22.2%	22.2%	33.3%		25.5%
Professional School	38.2%	2.9%	5.3%	8.3%	11.1%	5.6%	11.1%		13.9%
Springboard/ ICT	8.8%	20.0%	5.3%	16.7%	11.1%	11.1%	0.0%		11.7%

Subjects of Complaints initiated

Dept/Area or Subject Concerned	Academic Year							Potential Data Gap	Grand Total
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 (as of 7/3/2024)		
Student (lodged by Staff)		1					1		2
Another Student (lodged by Student)		1	2	1	1	2	1		8
Academic Operations		4	4			1	1		10
Academic Operations & Faculty	1			1	1				3
Academic Programmes/ School Operations & Exams Office			1						1
Academic Programmes/ School Operations	7	2	2	2		3			16
Accounts		1					1		2
Admissions							3		3
Admissions, School Operations	1	1							2
Exams		6	1	2	1				10
Exams & Academic Operations	3	4		1	1	1	1		11
Exams & Faculty	1	2							3
Facilities		1							1
Faculty	1	11	9	5	4	10	1		41
Library					1				1
N/A		1							1
Potential Data Gap								1	1
Undesignated	20						1		21
Grand Total	34	35	19	12	9	18	9	1	137

Breakdown of Status of initiated Complaints (including incomplete or withdrawn submissions)

Status	Academic Year							Potential Data Gap	Grand Total
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 (as of 7/3/2024)		
Open				1		1	2		4
Closed	21	23	15	8	9	16	6		98
Did Not Submit	13	12	3	3		1	1		33
Undesignated			1						1
Potential Data Gap								1	1
Grand Total	34	35	19	12	9	18	9	1	137
	Proportion of Total Complaints Initiated								Grand Total
Open	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	8.3%	0.0%	5.6%	22.2%		2.9%
Closed	61.8%	65.7%	78.9%	66.7%	100.0%	88.9%	66.7%		71.5%
Did Not Submit	38.2%	34.3%	15.8%	25.0%	0.0%	5.6%	11.1%		24.1%

Appendix 15. Appeals Data

Appeals initiated, by Programme Type

Programme Type	Academic Year						Grand Total
	2018-19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 (as of 7/3/2024)	
UG Arts	13	4	2	4	9		32
PG Arts	10	14	16	2	9	2	53
UG Business	51	32	15	4	9	1	112
PG Business	51	57	51	36	80	16	291
ProfSchool		4			1		5
Springboard/ ICT	14	18	2	4	1	1	40
Study Abroad	1						1
Grand Total	140	129	86	50	109	20	534
Programme Type	Proportion of Appeals/Verifications/Script Viewing						Grand Total
	2018-19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 (as of 7/3/2024)	
UG Arts	9.3%	3.1%	2.3%	8.0%	8.3%	0.0%	6.0%
PG Arts	7.1%	10.9%	18.6%	4.0%	8.3%	10.0%	9.9%
UG Business	36.4%	24.8%	17.4%	8.0%	8.3%	5.0%	21.0%
PG Business	36.4%	44.2%	59.3%	72.0%	73.4%	80.0%	54.5%
ProfSchool	0.0%	3.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%	0.9%
Springboard/ ICT	10.0%	14.0%	2.3%	8.0%	0.9%	5.0%	7.5%
Study Abroad	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%

Appeals initiated, by Discipline (and sub-discipline)

Discipline (and subdisciplines)	Academic Year						Grand Total
	2018-19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 (as of 7/3/2024)	
Accounting & Finance	24	26	15	6	17	3	91
Arts, Languages & Study Abroad	1						1
Business, Marketing & Law - BUSINESS	42	22	17	21	24	8	134
Business, Marketing & Law - LAW	10	16	4		1		31
Business, Marketing & Law - MARKETING	4	2	5	5	16	2	34
Computing	36	45	27	12	33	5	158
Human & Social Sciences - PSYCHOLOGY	22	18	17	5	16	2	80
Human & Social Sciences - PSYCHOTHERAPY			1	1	2		4
Human & Social Sciences - Social Science	1						1
Grand Total	140	129	86	50	109	20	534

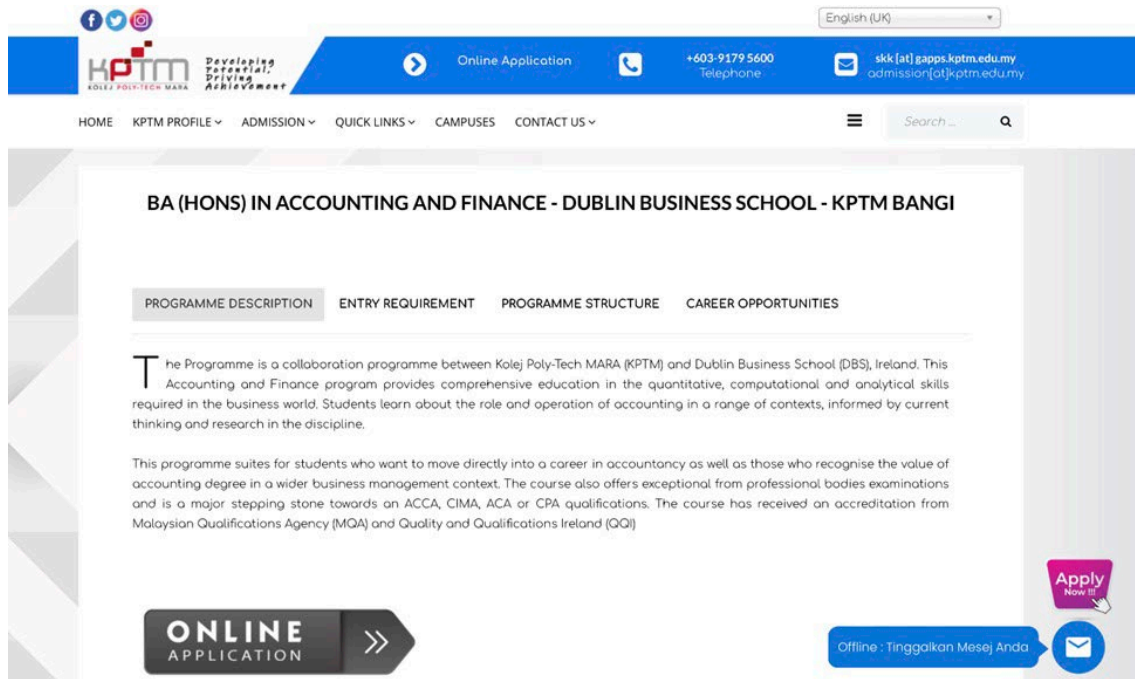
Type of Appeal initiated

Appeal Type	Academic Year						Grand Total
	2018-19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 (as of 7/3/2024)	
AI				4	17	4	25
Appeal	56	66	73	32	65	12	304
Verification	18	10	8	6	16	4	62
View Script	66	53	5	8	11		143
Grand Total	140	129	86	50	109	20	534

Appendix 16. Website Information – Transnational Partner KPTM

Site link: <https://www.kptm.edu.my/en/component/content/article/103-program-ditawarkan/kptm-bangi/403-ba-hons-in-accounting-and-finance-dublin-business-school-kptm-bangi-en.html?Itemid=1145>

If there is a time-out while attempting to access, this may be the result of geo-blocks. Screenshots of the pages are provided below:



PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION **ENTRY REQUIREMENT** PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Programme :

Bachelor Of Arts (Honours) in Accounting and Finance 3+0 In Collaboration With Dublin Business School, Ireland

Programme Duration :

3 Years 4 Months

Campus :

KPTM Bangi

Programme Code :

AA231

Programme Code :

RM62,950 | International - RM76,000

Medium of Instruction :

English

Reference :

R2/0411/6/0008 (09/2028) MQA/FA3633

Certification Body :

DUBLIN BUSINESS SCHOOL (DBS), IRELAND

Minimum Requirement :

Matriculation / Foundation or its equivalent with minimum CGPA 2.50, credit in Mathematics at SPM level, and MUET Band 4;

Students from Foundation in Accounting (AA001) KPTM Bangi, an English Language requirements is MUET Band 2

Note: Requirement of credit in Mathematics at SPM level for candidates from Matriculation / Foundation could be exempted if the qualification contains Mathematics and the attainment for this subject is equivalent / more than the credit needs of Mathematics at SPM level. * Subject to approval by DBS

OR

PASS Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia (STPM) or its equivalent with minimum Grade C+ (CGPA 2.33) in any TWO (2) subjects, credit in Mathematics at SPM level, and MUET Band 4/ IELTS Band 6.0 / TOEFL 550,

Note: Requirement of credit in Mathematics at SPM level for candidates from STPM could be exempted if the qualification contains Mathematics and the attainment for this subject is equivalent / more than the credit needs of Mathematics at SPM level. * Subject to approval by DBS

OR

Diploma in Accountancy or related field, or its equivalent with minimum CGPA 2.50, and MUET Band 2;

For diploma not conducted in English, an English Language requirement is MUET Band 4 / IELTS Band 6.0 / TOEFL 550.

* Subject to approval by DBS

OR

Other equivalent qualifications recognized by the Malaysian Government

Note: The condition of credit of Mathematics at SPM level can be exempted for STPM, STAM and Matriculation/Foundation candidates if the said qualification contains Mathematics.

BA (HONS) IN ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE - DUBLIN BUSINESS SCHOOL - KPTM BANGI

PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION ENTRY REQUIREMENT **PROGRAMME STRUCTURE**

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

YEAR 1

Principles of Accounting
Economics Perspectives
Business Maths & Research Methods
Business Context and Organization
IT Essentials
Accounting Information System
Learning to Learn

YEAR 2

Financial Management
Financial Accounting
Cost Accounting
Management
Business and Company Law (Malaysian Variant)
Ethics and Corporate Governance
Advanced Economic Perspectives
Hubungan Etnik
Bahasa Melayu Komunikasi 2
Bahasa Kebangsaan A/ Leadership and Interpersonal Skills/ Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship 2
Tamadun Islam dan Tamadun Asia Tenggaraaysian Studies 3

YEAR 3

Performance Management(Accounting)
Financial Reporting
Taxation System (Malaysian Variant)
Advanced Financial Management
Capstone Project
Audit and Assurance
Family Issues in Malaysia
Community Service 2/ Sport Events Management 2

YEAR 4

Industrial Training



BA (HONS) IN ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE - DUBLIN BUSINESS SCHOOL - KPTM BANGI

PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION ENTRY REQUIREMENT PROGRAMME STRUCTURE **CAREER OPPORTUNITIES**

Accounting and finance knowledge is becoming the vital mainstay for businesses and operations in globalised economy. So, with this programme, graduates hold a privilege a fast track to professional accountancy qualification and avail exceptional exemptions from the professional bodies and high potential to develop their profession.

There is a lot of demands for accounting professionals in different sectors and fields. Graduates from this programme have a career option in public and private sector. A career in accounting may range from an entry level to executive level. Their profession includes Accountant, Auditor, Account Manager, Financial Analyst, Budget Analyst, Financial Planner, Tax Consultant and Financial Consultant.



Offline · Tinggalkan Mesej Anda



Source link for institute: <https://bangi.kptm.edu.my>

Programme code: Bachelor AA231

Appendix 17.

Summary of Areas of Improvement

Governance and Quality Management

DBS Mission and Strategy

1. Roll out the planning process to local level, ensuring every department has its own annual plan, reviewed by the President.
2. Ensure the availability of timely data to populate KPI reports and review their usage to ensure they are used as appropriate to influence improvement.
3. Communicate more comprehensively on the presence, make-up and purpose of the Governance Board.

Structures and Terms of Reference for the Governance and Management of Quality Assurance

1. Publish the minutes of Academic Board meetings to enhance the awareness of the Academic Board and its work.
2. Commence another review of the Governance Board.
3. Increase the awareness among staff of the Business Continuity Plan and what is required of staff in certain continuity circumstances.

The Documentation of Quality Assurance Policy and Procedures

1. Offer training to in-house policy writers to ensure learner-facing policies are accessible and the language does not hinder engagement for those for whom English is not their first language.
2. Formally identify impacted stakeholders when amending existing policies or standard operating procedures (SOPs), or when introducing new policies or SOPs, with a communication plan set out and implemented.
3. Explore the opportunities of artificial intelligence-driven systems to facilitate the accessibility of policies.
4. Formalise an annual or cyclical review phase for all SOPs belonging to a department in the department's annual workplan, and ensure sufficient time is set aside to conduct this review and implement changes as required.
5. Formalise the inclusion of SOPs during the onboarding of new staff.

Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

1. Focus on targeted recruitment to reduce our gender pay gap.
2. Ensure we are addressing staff needs through individual personal development plans.
3. Facilitate cross-collaboration projects where staff can play an active role and input into decision making.
4. Actively recruit additional Faculty Managers to support faculty.
5. Further invest in our DBS management team through management development programmes and bespoke individual development plans.

Governance and Quality Management

Programme Development, Approval and Submission for Validation

1. Consider establishing an optimal volume of programmes for the College to operate at any one time, influenced by viability and QA considerations.
2. To ensure streamlined and effective processes, review the resourcing and workflows of teams undertaking and managing programme development and review, panel coordination and liaison with the awarding bodies.
3. Set out additional internal training and guidelines for new team members undertaking the review or development process.
4. Consider the process for Programme Review and Revalidation such that the Programme Review part is given greater focus and is a clear input to the programme changes.
5. Improve the engagement across programme development and review teams with each other and with operational teams to identify and appropriately manage shared resources, such as room capacities, cross-teaching and multimodal delivery.

Access, Transfer and Progression

1. Review all information to applicants to ensure the information provided on programmes and modules is comprehensive.
2. Build pathways for progression with recommended learning routes.
3. Introduce operational enhancements to the process for non-standard applications, to include additional training on RPL applications and templates where interviews are being used.
4. Enhance the reporting of progression and completion through amendments to the current report. In the longer term consider accessing data visualisation tools that will enable better insights and more timely academic decisions

Integrity and Approval of Learner Results

1. Review processes, systems and resourcing to effect improvement in accuracy and timeliness of data going to Exam Boards.
2. Proactively manage the performance of faculty members who do not correctly or in a timely fashion complete assessment corrections and upload assessment marks to the requisite system.

Information and Data Management

1. Complete the cleansing of data migrated from the old student information system to the new system and complete the production of a full suite of reports that accesses the correct data on the system.
2. Employ business intelligence tools to enable high-level analysis and identification of trends.
3. Consider introducing business continuity incident response exercises across the College.

Governance and Quality Management

Public Information and Communications

1. Complete operational improvements to enhance the clarity of and accessibility to public information (e.g. website redesign, procedures for appropriate programme communication from academic departments to the Marketing Department, and others).
2. Review the volume and type of communications sent to active learners with a view to streamlining or identifying improved channels.

Other Parties Involved in Education and Training

1. Annually review the risks related to Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies accreditation compliance on all programmes to which it applies.
2. Consideration the quality assurance resourcing within the DBS Registrar's Office in the event that transnational and domestic collaborations increase in line with the stated objectives of the College.

Research, Enterprise and Innovation

1. Increase recorded research outputs.
2. Garner external funding for research projects across the College.
3. Expand research outreach both internally and externally, using the Practical Applied Research Conference as a vehicle to enable additional collaboration with Irish and international partners.

Teaching and Learning

Teaching and Learning – Strategy

1. The SLATE2 Action Plan should be reviewed on a regular schedule, with reporting on milestones as they are achieved. The Action Plan should be updated as necessary over its lifetime to ensure it remains current and responsive.
2. Programme-level teaching and learning strategies should be reviewed and refreshed in light of SLATE2 and the Action Plan to ensure continued alignment.

Teaching and Learning – Structures

1. Continue to keep academic staffing requirements, specifically with respect to academic management, under review.

Learning Environment

1. Complete the process of applying to QQI for quality assurance approval for delivery of online programmes.
2. Engage with QQI in aligning all programme validations with desired modes of delivery.
3. Align each programme delivery and teaching and learning strategy with SLATE2 as part of the above processes.

Teaching and Learning

Asynchronous Content Production

1. Evaluate and deploy new technologies that provide the best authoring environment relevant to the programme domain under development.
2. Improve the engagement across programme development and review teams with the Content Development Team to ensure all relevant stakeholder feedback is captured and shared.

Work-Integrated Learning

1. Continue to work with Industry Advisory Boards to ensure high-quality placement offerings in the College.
2. Include more placement options in programmes through the programme development process.
3. In the revision of the MSc in Information and Library Management programme, ensure the work placement component is appropriately reflected in the programme schedule.
4. For Higher Diploma learners selecting the placement elective, review the information provided before commencement to ensure full awareness and understanding of the value of completing the programme rather than exiting once a work opportunity has been secured.

Faculty and Staff Support and Training

1. Consider mechanisms to improve tracking of faculty engagement with training, supports and interventions.
2. Ensure outcomes of training and supports are followed up and the feedback loop is closed.
3. Continue to keep training needs under review and respond proactively, particularly with respect to emerging technologies.

Assessment of Learners

1. Continue to develop and implement marking rubrics to support timely and constructive feedback to learners.
2. Institute a review of assessment to address concerns around generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) and design innovative assessments that require learners to display more nuanced knowledge and skills.
3. Investigate the use of GenAI to reduce the potential of academic impropriety.
4. Review IT systems to facilitate optimisation of the workflow for assessment processing to support the quality assurance function.

Teaching and Learning

Supports for Learners

1. Introduce a student-friendly Student Contact Management System to allow a single channel for students to seek and receive support and advice.
2. Enhance the user interface and structure of content on the student portal to facilitate access to information, supports and advice.
3. Make greater use of business intelligence tools to enable the development of more tailored supports.
4. Create a mechanism for measuring the effectiveness of Student Life activities to assess their impact on the overall student experience in DBS.
5. Embed student supports more effectively into the overall learning experience, communicating comprehensively with faculty to enable this.
6. For transnational programmes, ensure that the supports provided by our partner institutions are benchmarked against DBS supports periodically to ensure we meet the needs of our learners in all settings.
7. Embed career supports more effectively in the learning experience, including considering the creation of credit-bearing careers elements in a programme.
8. Develop the Careers Team offerings, assistance, and support for students on work placement

Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

Quality and Qualification Ireland (QQI) Annual Quality Report

1. Embed the process for completion of the Annual Quality Report in the workings of the Quality Assurance, Enhancement and Sustainability Committee.
2. Develop a strategic approach to identification and development of valuable case studies for inclusion in the AQR through other processes in the College, such as nominations for Kaplan Way Awards.
3. Consider improved ways to disseminate the key outputs in the AQR to raise awareness of the importance of this document across the College.

Academic Plan

1. Ensure mechanisms are in place through the appropriate governance areas for regular review of progress towards the goals of the Academic Plan during the academic year in order to ensure that this is a live working document that is visible and a key point of reference for all stakeholders.

Risk Registers

1. Review the academic risk management system to ensure it is effective in its own right and that it is integrated, as outlined, with the institutional risk management system.

Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

Annual Review of Policies

1. Review the process for triggering updates to policies in the *Quality Assurance Handbook*.
2. Develop a plan for and complete updates to all policies and new policy creation which was commenced in 2023.
3. Ensure accessibility and visibility of the *QAH* to learners and staff through the websites and learning platforms.

Kaplan Learning Reviews

1. A more templated approach to the Learning Review will enable easier production and trend analysis.
2. Introduce more granular analysis of learner outcomes by cohort.

Annual Retention Reports

1. Consider the introduction of data analysis or business intelligence tools to enhance the analysis of recorded data.

Annual Programme Reports

1. Review templates for Annual Reports and the content included to maximise their value and ensure the required information is being fully captured and followed up.
2. Ensure Annual Report content is fully aligned with the requirements for Programme Review and thus seamlessly feeds into this larger process.

Departmental Audit

1. Review the outcomes of the first audit cycle in order to inform the next stages of the process.

Student Feedback

1. Introduce artificial intelligence-based functionality to manage and collect learner feedback, such as frequently asked question, ticketing systems, analysis of bulk survey responses, data scraping for informal complaints, and managing initial appeal queries that are not eligible for formal submission.
2. Introduce data visualisation tools to set up feedback-presenting dashboards.
3. Extend the Moodle audit process to improve learner experience in the virtual learning environment.
4. Improve the feedback loop closure process, reporting on updates to key learner stakeholder forums on previous queries or issues.
5. Establish a log of informal complaints to improve oversight of issues raised but not formally escalated through the complaints procedure.
6. Conduct a systematic categorising exercise for both appeals and complaints data to enhance reporting opportunities.

Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

Programme Monitoring and Review

1. Plan robustly for statutory Programme Review and Revalidation and ensure appropriate resources are allocated.
2. Carry out further analysis of conditions and recommendations arising from Independent Evaluations of Programmes since the last cycle, and identify themes and actions arising.
3. Conduct a review of all self-evaluation and monitoring processes to ensure continued coherence and that reports are fit for purpose, while removing duplication of reporting and ensuring that feedback loops are closed.

Other Reviews – Preparation for Delegated Authority and QQI Focused Review

1. All recommendations arising from the QQI Focused Review to be completed by May 2024.
2. All recommendations arising from the internal DBS mock panel for Delegated Authority to be reviewed and a revised project plan to be initiated, aligning with outcomes from the Institutional Review process.

Oversight, Monitoring and Review of Relationships with External/Third Parties and Other Collaborative Partners

1. A closer alignment of Dublin faculty with partner institutions' faculty will assist in teaching delivery and assessment of students. It will also assist in the ongoing development of faculty in both DBS and the partner Higher Education Institution.



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