

## **Procedures for Ongoing Monitoring of Programmes and Services**

The purpose of these procedures and guidelines is to:

- (i) Ensure that systematic processes exist for gathering and evaluating information that can be used to improve the delivery of programmes
- (ii) Ensure that programmes remain up-to-date and continue to achieve their stated aims
- (iii) Monitor the degree to which learners meet the intended learning outcomes of the programmes and the extent to which the assessment mechanisms are efficient and appropriate
- (iv) Contribute to the development of a quality culture in which all participants are aware of their respective roles and that actions are taken to meet observed weaknesses in the programmes
- (v) Position the monitoring of programmes within a framework of systematic periodic review

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### **Part 1**

#### **Introduction**

1. It is the policy of DBL College to closely monitor the programmes and services provided in order to ensure that they meet the needs and requirements of our students. A variety of techniques are employed to do this: we believe that through ongoing evaluation of our programmes and services, we can continue to develop in a way that facilitates the best possible learning experience. Self-evaluation also enables the academic management to identify those aspects of the curriculum which are positive and to target those which are in need of improvement or development.

2. Both academic management and staff play key roles in the self-evaluation of programmes on offer at DBL. It is essential that each person knows exactly what role they play in order to facilitate effective evaluation of our programmes. Teaching staff liaise with the Director of Studies (and occasionally with the other directors) in the process of evaluation, and bi-monthly meetings are held to ensure ongoing communication on evaluation procedures. Teachers are required to regularly complete questionnaires and surveys, the findings of which are used in evaluating our programmes and services. Through this process we can identify any weaknesses in our system and in turn address these.

3. Teachers also liaise with students in the self-evaluation process. One-to-one teacher/student feedback sessions take place on a regular basis and the findings from these are passed onto academic management to help them in their role of evaluating the services provided. Student questionnaires and surveys (see Appendix 8) are also part of the methodology employed by DBL.

4. Through self-evaluation we are able to assess the following:

- a. The extent to which the needs and requirements of our students are being met.
- b. The effectiveness of the teaching methods employed by our staff.
- c. How appropriate are the resources/supplementary materials used by the school?

- d. How well do our courses prepare students for further education/training or employment?
  - e. The training and development needs of our staff.
  - f. The effectiveness of our procedures for ongoing training and development.
  - g. Ways in which our methods of assessment can be improved.
5. Through self-evaluation, we are continually seeking ways to improve our programmes and services in a way which best meet the needs and requirements of our students.
6. The College conducts an evaluation that results in a report, which is based on a hands-on assessment of the workings, structures and facilities of the College itself, as outlined in the document "Procedures for Self-Evaluation" (Section 8). This is then developed to create a plan to improve the performance and overall excellence of the College.
7. This evaluation is constant – involving ongoing assessments conducted during each term (October-December, January-March, April-June and July-September) – but the College produces a full evaluation report and improvement plan after its annual general meeting in June. This is also assessed by the External Evaluator, who is a recognised expert in the educational field, a representative of one of the Awarding Bodies, or both.
8. It is then vigorously but carefully implemented. The Director of Studies has the responsibility for doing this follow-up. The implementation of the improvement plan is prepared before classes begin again in October and its success is assessed through weekly meetings between the director of studies and the registrar over this first term. Thereafter, if the initial implementation is judged to be a success, it is normally the case that there are monthly meetings with the same focus. The College recognises that from time to time an assessment of its policies and practices will be undertaken by an external evaluator and welcomes this outside assistance.
9. This methodology of evaluation is based on the procedures set out in the following documents:
1. Relevant Quality Assurance Policy and Procedures.
  2. Relevant Curriculum and Assessment Documents.
  3. Programme Content.
  4. Staff and Student Questionnaires.
  5. Procedures for Assessment of Learners.
  6. Staff Recruitment and Development.
  7. Teacher and Student Handbooks.
  8. Matrix of Responsibilities for Internal and External Examinations.
  9. Relevant Procedures for Self-Evaluation.
  10. Relevant Documents Relating to External Examiners/Evaluators/Verifiers.

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## **Part 2**

### **Characteristics of Monitoring**

1. Monitoring programmes involves the ongoing assessment of programme delivery.
2. The experience gained from delivering the programme should be evaluated in the context of the programme's specified aims and intended learner outcomes.
3. This examination of the programmes should focus on the links between the subjects/modules, the demands on the learners, and the coherence and completeness of the programme delivered.
4. It is a College requirement that the Directors of Studies complete that part of their general review involving the Course Monitoring for *each* programme and that the necessary changes must be introduced for the next delivery of the programme. This will be overseen by the Academic Director.
5. College regulations require that each the Director of Studies be supplied with all relevant course monitoring and review data.

6. The Registrar will supply the admissions information, in the required format, to the Director of Studies as it becomes available.

7. The Director of Studies will ensure that the final examination data, obtained from the Registrar, is completed by 15 June to facilitate the completion of the annual QA Report.

8. All of the course monitoring/review data will be made available from 15 August of each year.

#### **A. Academic Council**

1. One of the main focuses of the Academic Council is to monitor the ongoing delivery of programmes and to introduce improvements. Whenever the Academic Council meets to consider the monitoring of programmes, at least two student representatives must be present.

2. The quality of programme content, delivery and assessment is a major part of the annual QA report carried out in June. Equally, it is a central part of the quarterly assessments undertaken by the Directors of Studies.

#### **B. Student Progress**

1. The excellence of its educational services and the progress of students are together the central priorities of the College and, for this reason, such matters as learner attendance and quality of coursework are closely monitored throughout their time studying at the College.

2. Attendance is recorded by lecturers and is submitted to the School each week. The preparation of a record on student attendance and continuous assessment is overseen by the Director of Studies. This information is presented to the Academic Council at its monthly meetings.

3. The Director of Studies will ensure that students with poor attendance, coursework or participation are advised in accordance with the policy of the College. Guidelines on these, as approved by the Academic Council, are included in the "Student Handbook" made available to students at the beginning of their programme of studies.

4. It is important that the issues arising from Student Progress are included in the annual Quality Assurance Report, to be presented at the end of June.

#### **C. Surveys by Students**

1. Learners are given the opportunity to appraise the subject/module anonymously.

2. The survey method is principally a student questionnaire (see Appendix 8) but other related methods are also employed. This questionnaire encompasses: student attendance, resources available, organisation and content of subject, effectiveness of communication, and general evaluation and suggestions.

3. The lecturer's summary of the completed student surveys is a crucial element in the ongoing monitoring of programmes.

4. The Director of Studies will arrange to have the questionnaires administered towards the end of the academic year and will ensure that they are analysed for the first meeting of the Academic Council in the next academic year.

5. The appraisal of the programmes by learners is a central part in the ongoing monitoring of programmes. The report will reflect the learners' appraisal of the programme and must detail the actions to be undertaken to overcome weaknesses in the programme.

6. The College's regulations require that changes to be made as a result of appraisal by students must be clearly documented.

#### **D. External Examiners Reports**

1. External examiners are appointed by the College in accordance with the procedures outlined in Appendix 14 (see also Appendices 15 and 16).

2. Each external examiner is required to submit a report by 15<sup>th</sup> of June summarising the assessment/examinations of the previous academic year or period.
3. The external examiners' report is detailed in nature and provides important information for consideration by the Academic Council.
4. The issues raised by external examiners should be addressed in the annual QA Report. Existing and proposed measures and any deficiencies should be detailed.
5. The Directors of Studies will administer a questionnaire to all full-time students graduating on National Certificate, National Diploma and Degree programmes on graduation day. A copy of the questionnaire is included in Appendix 11, "Graduate Destination Survey".

#### **E. Academic Staff Questionnaire**

1. The academic "Staff Questionnaire" is included in Appendix 9. The questionnaire facilitates suggestions for improvements under each of the broad section headings.
2. The Director of Studies will organise the collection and analysis of these questionnaires for the first meeting of the Academic Council in the new academic year.
3. The Director of Studies will also provide the relevant sections of the questionnaire to the Academic Director, who will organise responses from the various service providers for consideration at the first meeting of the Academic Council in the new academic year.
4. The Annual Academic Staff Questionnaire is very important in the ongoing monitoring of programmes. The annual QA Report will reflect the staff responses. This section of the report must detail the revisions to be undertaken to overcome failings in any given programme.

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### **Part 3**

#### **Checklist for Ongoing Monitoring of Programmes**

1. It is essential to the success of a new programme of studies that quality and standards are monitored, initially after one year and then in a cycle every two years, for the following reasons:
  - a. programmes remain current and valid
  - b. to confirm that learning outcomes are being attained
  - c. the curriculum and teaching and assessment methodologies are fully appropriate
  - d. programmes are relevant to:
    - i. learner needs
    - ii. academic needs
    - iii. labour market needs
  - e. the overall project of improving the programmes of higher education and training
2. The **internal phase** should start with a self-evaluation of the unit concerned (whether that be a programme, group of programmes or school) in terms of the quality of its learning activities and services, as well as its premises, equipment and facilities. It should consist of a self-study carried out by all participants in the programme: academic staff, student representative(s), graduates and others, along with relevant outside stakeholders, external data. This results in a Self-Evaluation Report (SWOT analysis) which is sent to HETAC. This is carried out by a Course Board, whose duties are described in paragraph 5 below.
3. The **external phase** involves the selection by the College of appropriate experts at the national and/or international level in the area of best practice in further and higher education. Normally these experts are not employees of the Awarding Bodies. The roles, responsibilities and criteria for their selection should be clearly explained. They review the Self-Evaluation Report and conduct their own separate evaluation. These experts then

present an External Evaluation Report, which is reviewed by the College and then sent to HETAC.

4. HETAC will make recommendations based on both reports which the College will then implement, within an agreed timeframe and with a formal procedure in place to act upon the recommendations and to monitor their implementation and performance.

5. The **Course Board** comprises the Academic Director, the Director(s) of Studies, the Assessment Manager, the Internal Verifier, one student representative and an expert External Verifier. Its purpose is to conduct this follow-up with regard to the performance of new programmes of study and it meets two weeks before each term begins, at a date midway through term and one week after classes have finished.

6. Additional specialists may be added to the group at the discretion of the Academic Council. These may include a representative from the higher level education sector, the business world, an expert from an Awarding Body, a College alumnus, etc.

7. The responsibilities of this group include (but in practice may not be limited to) the following:

**a. Course Monitoring/Review Data (admissions, course work, exams)**

- (i) Analysis of Course Monitoring/Review Data by year
- (ii) Quality enhancement measures planned and changes made in response to Course Monitoring/Review Data

**b. Student attendance**

- (i) Analysis of student attendance by year
- (ii) Course board's response to attendance

**c. Extern Examiners' Reports**

- (i) Summary of Extern Examiners' Reports
- (ii) Quality enhancement measures planned and changes made in response to Extern Examiners' Reports

**d. Student Progress**

- (i) Summary of Student Progress Committee considerations and recommendations
- (ii) Changes made and planned arising from the Student Progress Committee

**e. Subject/Module Appraisal**

- (i) Summary of Subject/Module Appraisal by year
- (ii) Quality enhancement measures planned and changes made in response to Subject/Module Appraisal

**f. Programme Appraisal**

- (i) Summary of course provision appraisal
- (ii) Summary of service provision appraisal
- (iii) Quality enhancement measures planned and changes made in response to Programme Appraisal

**g. Monitoring of Programme**

- (i) Summary of quality enhancement changes made
- (i) Planned and recommended changes