

Procedures for Evaluation of Each Programme at Regular Intervals

Introduction

1. The purpose of these procedures and guidelines is to make sure that each periodic programme evaluation

1. Improves the quality of the programmes and contributes to the development of a quality culture
2. Ensures programmes remain current and continue to offer a valuable educational experience to the learner
3. Ensures that both academic and labour market needs of the learner are satisfied
4. Implements the procedures of the NQAI in relation to access, transfer and progression
5. Complies with all the requirements of the approved external validating body and takes into account the National Qualifications Framework

2. The importance of reviewing the curriculum and the conduct of programmes is understood by the Academic Council. Students' results will be recorded in the Database and can be easily analysed for monitoring purposes. The system allows students' queries to be dealt with quickly and efficiently. The curriculum is reviewed at regular intervals with the teachers to ensure that it is meeting the needs of both staff and students. Questionnaires are distributed to staff and students in order to receive feedback on the validity of the curriculum and assessment procedures. The College schedules an annual review of its programmes in June each year. It understands that this review might mean one of the following:

- a. Adding or replacing modules with new modules.
- b. Adding or replacing modules with imported modules.
- c. Withdrawal of a module.
- d. Minor or major change of module content.
- e. Minor or major change of programme.
- f. Postponement or cancellation of programme.
- g. Making other decisions affecting the entry requirements and assessment methodology, its accreditation status, its teaching staff, materials, equipment, facilities, and other associated matters.

Part 1

a. Regular Evaluation

1. Each programme or group of related programmes will be the subject of regular evaluation, at least once every two years, or as the approved validating body directs.

2. There is an internal element and an external element to this periodic evaluation. In general terms, these evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum, teaching performance and reliability of assessment in relation to the intended learning outcomes.

a. The internal element of evaluation comprises a self-evaluation of the programme(s), a plan for the subsequent period (e.g., two years) and a revised programme document.

b. The external element of evaluation entails an expert or group of experts from outside the College considering the evidence of the self-evaluation and conducting their own evaluation of the revised programme document and plan.

The details of these evaluations are described in Part 2, A and B respectively below.

3. For each programme (or group of related programmes) the intended outcomes are identified as the standard by which the effectiveness of the content and teaching methods, and the achievement of the learner, are measured. It is worth mentioning here that feedback from learners is essential.

4. The College's procedures for the assessment of learners, outlined in Section 5 above, are important for both the self-evaluation stage and also in the development of the revised programme document.

5. The feedback from employers is obtained to support the ongoing monitoring of programmes and their regular periodic evaluation (see Appendix 10).

6. As a consequence of this, a revised programme document is developed detailing

- a. revised aims and learning outcomes,
- b. revised course schedules,
- c. revised syllabi, and
- d. revised assessment plan.

7. To make this purpose clear, it is worth reiterating that all proposed new courses will be evaluated separately in accordance with the College's internal procedures and guidelines for the design and external validation of new programmes (see section 4) and the validating body's processes.

8. The following are a checklist of the principal objectives of this periodic self-evaluation:

- a. Measure the effectiveness of each of the courses approved.
- b. Analyse this information in the context of the views of the Awarding Body and the education sector, employers, professional bodies, etc.
- c. Evaluate the physical facilities provided by the College for the provision of the courses.
- d. Review other activities related to the area of study managed by College's (research, alumni feedback, etc.).
- e. Evaluate the College's flexibility in responding to market requirements and educational developments, in the context of its links with the wider community, and as such its capacity to maintain the relevance of its courses.
- f. Evaluate the College's projections and plan for the succeeding period (e.g., two years) in specific areas.
- g. The use of the self-evaluation in the proposed revisions to the programme.
- h. Finally, develop a revised programme document that takes account of the views of the relevant stakeholders.

b. Main Focuses of Programme Evaluation

1. The self-evaluation report (SER) must provide information under the following headings in respect of the approved programmes being reviewed:

i. Internal College Processes

This section sets out the mechanisms whereby changes in proposed programmes are processed through the internal College academic structure including the Academic Council.

ii. Student Throughput

a. Relevant statistics (above all those to do with enrolments and examinations) for the previous two years must be provided per course, and

b. they should be analysed in terms of student withdrawals, retention and examination performance, as well as any special initiatives in relation to admissions (e.g. broadening access).

iii. Review of Course Design

a. Any evaluation of programmes must be undertaken according to the current HETAC approved course literature and guidelines.

b. It should also take into account any changes implemented or proposed in previous evaluation(s) to the same programme(s). Normally this means that the report of the previous external expert or new course evaluation group must also be appended.

iv. General Assessment

The assessment of learners will be examined in terms of whether they are

- (i) fair and consistent and comply with standards determined by HETAC,
- (ii) complying with the National Framework of Qualifications,
- (iii) effective in measuring the students' attainment of the intended learning outcomes, and
- (iv) contribute to the total learning experience

v. Other factors pertaining to the evaluation are:

- a. Employment and programmes of further study undertaken by graduates
- b. Any national and international transfers
- c. Review of classrooms and other facilities
- d. Appointment, performance and development of academic staff
- e. Links with industry and the wider community
- f. Any research carried out
- g. Course delivery methodologies
- h. Academic regulations
- i. A follow-up development plan
- j. A self-contained programme document for each programme evaluated

Part 2

Steps to Complete the Evaluation Reports

a. Internal Stage (Self-Evaluation Report)

1. The Director of Studies will present a plan to the Academic Council for conducting a rigorous self-evaluation. This plan will outline the process to be followed in conducting this review and also identify a calendar of activities clearly stating when specific elements of the work will be completed. The Director of Studies will present progress reports at each Academic Council meeting until the evaluation is successfully completed.

2. The Academic Council will consider this plan and may make recommendations. It is recommended that a plan be designed mapping this process (from presenting the plan for conducting the self-evaluation to submission to the relevant validating body) and identifying the persons responsible for specific dates of completion for each step involved.

3. The self-evaluation will then commence and the Academic Council will ask the Academic Director to liaise with the Director of Studies during this phase, with the flexibility to invite others to assist them as they see it necessary.

4. The final agreed programme document will be retained in the particular School and the Academic Director's Office, and made available on intranet.

5. The compilation of an SER must be prepared in accordance with best international practice as well as relevant HETAC procedures and guidelines.

6. The Academic Council will examine the SER in terms of the College's Strategic Plan and the College's resource planning.

7. The SER will be examined against the criteria outlined above in Part 1, College guidelines, the findings of previous review panels, international best practice, the validating body's requirements, and the national qualifications framework.

8. When the Academic Council is satisfied that the amended draft SER complies with both the College's standards and the appropriate validating body's standards, it will then be examined by an external evaluator.

b. External Stage (External Evaluation Report)

1. The External Expert will examine the SER in terms of College procedures, HETAC requirements (or other appropriate validating body) and also the national qualifications framework.
2. The objectives outlined above, "Main Focuses of Programme Evaluation", can also be used as a template for this External Evaluation Report (EER).
3. The External Expert will present a report at the end of his/her visit to the relevant Director of Studies, Academic Director and Principal (or their nominees).
4. The Director of Studies, in conjunction with the relevant course board, will address the expert's recommendations. The Academic Council will consider any recommendations from the expert that have general implications for the College. The responses to the report of the External Expert will be brought to the attention of the Academic Council.
5. The Academic Council will consider this final report and may request additional changes to the submission document.
6. Where the Academic Council recommends approval, the revised submission will include the SER and the EER, and the College's responses.
7. The Academic Director will submit to the validating body the revised submission as approved by the Academic Council.
8. The Academic Council will be informed of the decision of the validating body and given copies of the approval and of any comments or conditions attached. If the validating body seeks a re-submission, the re-submission will be put before the Academic Council and action taken.
9. The appropriate Director of Studies, in conjunction with the Academic Director, will review the performance of the amended programmes.

Part 3

Methods of Self-Evaluation

At DBL we employ a variety of methods for self-evaluation. The overall responsibility of the self-evaluation process lies with the directors and academic management, under the supervision of the Assessment Manager coordinated by the Internal Verifier, and both staff (teaching and administrative) and students are integral parts of the self-evaluation process. Any input from an external verifier is greatly welcomed as well. There is in addition a full general evaluation by the External Evaluator of the College in June.

Along with the annual general evaluation in June, there are quarterly evaluations before Easter, at the end of September and in December.

For English language courses, the teaching staff for each level liaise with the academic management to evaluate the courses, using guidelines and materials supplied by the Assessment Manager through the Director of Studies. For certain individual courses (e.g., Business Administration, Tourism and Travel), the onus is on the designated teacher to evaluate the course in question. The input of students (through interviews with individuals, meetings, questionnaires and other written feedback) is very strongly encouraged.

All this is undertaken under the supervision of the Assessment Manager coordinated by the Internal Verifier. Evaluations are ongoing and the findings are used in the future development and improvement of courses offered by DBL College.

In the following document we will attempt to outline and explain the various techniques used.

a. Teaching observations

The purpose of the teaching observations is to ensure that all courses offered by DBL College are delivered to the highest possible standard. It is the responsibility of the Assessment Manager and director of studies, supervised by the Internal Verifier, to ensure that all teachers are observed on a regular basis and that any problems that may arise during observation are addressed.

Teachers are observed on a regular basis as part of the training and development programme. Each teacher is observed a minimum of four times each year and observations can also be arranged upon the request of the teacher. At least 2 days' notice is given before the observation takes place and teachers are asked to provide the observer with a copy of the lesson plan for the day of observation as well as a scheme of work for that week. Teachers are also asked to provide copies of any materials used.

The observer usually sits in for between 45 minutes and 1 hour of the lesson and does not participate in the lesson unless specifically asked to do so. A feedback session takes place at a pre-arranged time after the lesson; firstly the teacher is asked to self-evaluate his/her lesson then the observer goes through the observations and makes recommendations on any areas which could be improved on. The teacher is then given a copy of the observation worksheet to take with them so as they can refer to any advice given in the future.

If a problem is observed during a class observation, the academic management will advise the teacher in question how to best deal with it. Another observation will be arranged for a future date to ensure the teacher has overcome this problem. Peer observation can also be arranged upon request to allow teachers to gain from the experience of others.

b. Questionnaires

Both teachers and students are asked to complete questionnaires on a regular basis; the findings of these are used to identify weaknesses/areas in need of improvement and these areas are then addressed. Questionnaires are anonymous but we ask students to complete them during class-time and teachers to fill theirs out during staff meetings to ensure that all distributed questionnaires are returned. Examples of questionnaires are found in Appendices 8, 9 and 11.

The questionnaires used by DBL have been designed to assess both courses currently on offer at the College and the individual experience of the learner during their time spent there. As the questionnaires have been designed with foreign learners of English in mind, the language is deliberately basic so as to ensure the comprehension of the student as far as possible. Students of business also have specially designed questionnaires to fill in. In both cases, there is a strong onus on constructive student feedback and follow-up by the College management.

c. Staff meetings

A staff meeting is held every second Thursday which gives teachers the opportunity to voice any difficulties they may be experiencing with their classes. An agenda is set for each meeting and a memo with the agenda is posted on the staffroom notice-board a few days beforehand to remind teachers of the meeting and to allow them time to think of any other issues which need to be addressed.

These meetings are an ideal time for teachers to share ideas and to make suggestions on any pedagogical aspect of the syllabus. Any issues which are raised at the meetings will be in turn addressed; this helps with the overall development of the curriculum.

Minutes are taken at each meeting and a record of these and records of the agendas are filed.

d. Student focus groups

Once a month, a group of students is selected by academic management for interview. A few days before the interview, the selected students are given a questionnaire to complete and are asked to bring it with them on the day. During the interview the students' answers are discussed and the findings are used in future planning of the curriculum and other aspects of school life.

e. External Evaluators

The evaluation of College activities 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 for its annual general meeting in June. This is supervised by the External Evaluator, who is a recognised expert in the educational field, a representative of one of the Awarding Bodies, or both.

This person participates in the assessments established in this document, advising on the methods, range of focuses and outcomes expected.

In the case of DBL College, the chief External Evaluator is Christine Harpur, formerly head of centre assessments in the island of Ireland for City and Guilds.

Part 4

General Checklist

1. The College bases its activities on the principle that programmes are developed, delivered and reviewed according to teacher performance and student needs and support, as well as related areas such as health and safety concerns, approval and moderation by outside bodies, alumni relations, buildings and facilities, information and other resources (including equipment), and general College administration (its performance and development) and the entire spectrum of internal services.

2. All records concerning these procedures and assessments will be kept in appropriate form for review and evaluation, under the auspices of the College Principal and the Academic Council. A general assessment of programme development, delivery and review is undertaken by the quality assurance team (the Assessment Manager, the Internal Verifier and the Examinations Secretary) in June of each year, at the close of the academic year.

3. The forms of evidence will be verifiable; as such, the College will keep records of all reviews available for “in-house” purposes and for the purposes of quality evaluation undertaken by Awarding Bodies.

4. The purpose of these periodic reviews is, among other objectives, to ensure that improvements are made to programmes of higher education and training and to ensure that programmes remain relevant to learner, academic and labour market needs.

To achieve the above, the College has established a checklist to look at all aspects of programme development, delivery and review.

1. COURSE/PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT, DELIVERY AND REVIEW

Curriculum Development

The development of the college's taught curriculum, and proper records kept documenting this.

Monitoring of external developments and trends to inform the development of the college's taught curriculum, and proper records kept documenting this.

Curriculum Review

Routine and *ad hoc* feedback on the college's curriculum from staff, students, external examiners and others, and proper records kept documenting this.

The conduct and results of formal reviews of the college's curriculum, and the responses to the results, and proper records kept documenting this.

Programme Development

The development of the college's programmes, and proper records kept documenting this.

Monitoring of external developments and trends to inform the development of the college's programmes, and proper records kept documenting this.

Monitoring of programme developments in other educational colleges, and proper records kept documenting this.

Programme Approval & Accreditation

The process of obtaining approval and/or accreditation for programmes from professional, statutory or other accreditation bodies, and proper records kept documenting this.

Programme Review

Data on, and analyses of, student numbers and other programme statistics, and proper records kept documenting this.

Routine solicited feedback on programmes from staff and examiners: individual feedback, and proper records kept documenting this.

Routine solicited feedback on programmes from students: individual feedback, and proper records kept documenting this.

Summaries and analyses of routine solicited feedback on programmes from staff, examiners and students, and proper records kept documenting this.

Reports of routine internal reviews of programmes, and proper records kept documenting this.

Conduct and results of formal independent reviews of programmes, and the responses to the results, and proper records kept documenting this.

Course Development

Development of the college's courses, and proper records kept documenting this.

Monitoring of external developments and trends to inform the development of the college's courses, and proper records kept documenting this.

Monitoring of course developments in other educational colleges, and proper records kept documenting this.

Course Preparation & Delivery

Development of course materials, and proper records kept documenting this.

Final versions of course materials.

Reports documenting the planning and conduct of teaching events.

Course Review

Data on, and analyses of, student numbers and other course statistics, and proper records kept documenting this.

Routine solicited feedback on courses from staff and examiners: individual feedback, and proper records kept documenting this.

Routine solicited feedback on courses from students: individual feedback, and proper records kept documenting this.

Summaries and analyses of routine solicited feedback on courses from staff, examiners and students, and proper records kept documenting this.

Reports of routine internal reviews of courses, and proper records kept documenting this.

Conduct and results of formal reviews of courses, and the responses to the results, and proper records kept documenting this.

Course Assessment

Development of course assessments, and proper records kept documenting this.

Final versions of course assessments.

Course students' submitted/completed assessments.

Marks awarded to submitted/completed assessments, including reviews in response to notifications of mitigating circumstances and academic appeals, and proper records kept documenting this.

Awards and classifications, and proper records kept documenting this.

Financial Support for Course/Programme Development, Delivery and Review

Sufficient budget allocation to support course/programme development, delivery and review.

2. STUDENT EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Student Academic Support

Feedback on academic progress, and general academic guidance and support, given to individual students, and proper records kept documenting this.

Student Administration Strategy Development

The activities involved in developing and establishing the college's student administration strategy.

Student Administration Planning

The activities involved in formulating plans to implement the college's student administration strategy.

Student Administration Performance Management

The activities involved in managing the college's performance against the plans for the implementation of its student administration strategy.

Activities include: developing performance indicators and measurement mechanisms; measuring, monitoring and analysing performance; conducting formal reviews of performance and responding to the results, including preparing and implementing action plans to address under-performance or other issues raised; keeping attendance lists and the proper and full follow-up that is done based on this information.

Student Administration Policy Development

The activities involved in developing and establishing the college's student administration policies.

Student Administration Procedures Development

The activities involved in developing the college's student administration procedures.

Student Recruitment

The activities involved in recruiting students to study at the college.

Activities include: designing and conducting student recruitment campaigns (e.g. advertising); designing and organising student recruitment events (e.g. open days and recruitment fairs); designing and operating student recruitment schemes (e.g. school liaison); issuing recruitment materials (e.g. to schools); handling enquiries from prospective students; organising communications with students and potential students; analysing recruitment and retention data.

Student Admission

The activities involved in admitting students to the college.

Activities include: determining and applying admissions criteria; handling applications for admission; administering the clearing process; managing overall student numbers.

Student Registration

The activities involved in registering students on taught or research programmes.

Activities include: advising students on selection of programmes and courses; confirming payment of fees, including validating evidence of awards which include payment of fees; providing information and advice on funding opportunities for students; issuing student (identification) cards and replacements.

For collecting fees and for handling payments for replacement student cards, see "Finance Management – Financial Accounting" below.

Student Induction

The activities involved in:

- Compiling and maintaining complete and accurate records of the progress and conduct of students throughout their relationship with the college
- Making students' records, and aggregated student data and analyses available to departments to support other institutional activities

Activities include: setting up student records for new students; collecting data and updating student records in accordance with institutional rules and regulations (as set out in Appendix 1); conducting standard analyses of data on students; conducting ad hoc analyses of data to meet specific requirements; distributing student records, and aggregated data and analyses, to departments in accordance with institutional rules and regulations and in compliance with legal restrictions on the collection, handling and use of personal data; producing transcripts for current and former students; confirming awards and providing general references for students.

Student Progress Administration

The activities involved in tracking the academic progress of students, administering changes to programmes of study and ensuring that correct procedures are followed.

Activities include: identifying and monitoring unsatisfactory academic performance and progress; administering transfers to new programmes and changes of courses within programmes; verifying that students have satisfied institutional regulations for awards; administering withdrawals from the college; administering terminations of programmes.

Student Disciplinary Case Handling

The activities involved in conducting disciplinary proceedings against students for breaches of the college's academic regulations (e.g. cheating in examinations) or for misconduct (e.g. improper use of colleges' computer systems).

Activities include: investigating allegations; informing students of disciplinary decisions and imposing penalties; considering appeals by students against disciplinary decisions or penalties imposed.

Student Academic Appeal Handling

The activities involved in handling appeals by students against the results of assessments.

Assessments include examinations, tests and assessed work (e.g. dissertations, theses, work placement reports) for both taught and research programmes.

Activities include: reviewing original marks; considering mitigating circumstances; informing students of decisions on appeals.

Student Complaint Handling

The activities involved in handling formal complaints by students against the college.

Activities include: reviewing complaints; informing students of decisions on complaints.

Course Administration

The activities involved in administering the delivery of courses.

Activities include: managing the use of teaching space; timetabling teaching; compiling class and tutorial lists; drawing up schedules for submission, marking and return of assessed work, and monitoring compliance with these schedules; monitoring students' attendance; monitoring students' submission of coursework; organising required work placements; issuing attendance certificates for postgraduate research students.

Assessment Administration

The activities involved in administering the conduct of assessments.

Assessments include examinations, tests and assessed work (e.g. dissertations, theses, work placement reports) for both taught and research programmes.

Activities include: determining assessment and examination rules and procedures; appointing examiners; liaising with examiners on administrative matters; appointing and training examination invigilators; controlling examination materials; timetabling examinations; organising examination facilities; organising facilities and measures to accommodate students with special needs; monitoring attendance at examinations and reporting mitigating circumstances and absences to academic departments; administering the marking of examination scripts; servicing examiners' meetings; collating examination results; issuing pass lists and individual notifications of examination results; monitoring submission of assessed work and reporting problems to academic departments;

administering the submission and examination of portfolios and theses; issuing lists and individual notifications of awards.

Award Ceremony Administration

The activities involved in organising awards ceremonies.

Activities include: timetabling ceremonies; organising facilities and ticketing for ceremonies; organising the design and production of programmes for ceremonies; organising the production of awards certificates; sending awards certificates to students who do not attend awards ceremonies.

Student Relations Management

The activities involved in managing the college's relationship with its student body.

Activities include: developing and implementing communication mechanisms to ensure that students are properly informed about the nature of their relationship with the college, their rights and responsibilities and the support available to them; establishing and operating staff–student liaison committees at department, school or faculty level; organising the election and/or appointment of student representatives to the college's governing body and executive committees; training elected student representatives to fulfil their roles effectively; conducting student satisfaction surveys to assess students' overall experiences of colleges; operating student suggestions schemes.

Financial Support for Student Activities

Sufficient budget allocation to support all student activities – their development, delivery and review – and full records kept of this.

3. STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES MANAGEMENT

The function of providing services to support students throughout their relationship with the college.

Student support services include: welfare services; accommodation services; counselling services; careers services; health services; religious services; disability services; catering services; childcare services; sports and leisure services; language centres; study centres for international students; social facilities for postgraduate students.

Student support services may be: managed and provided directly by the college; specified by the college but managed and provided by a third party organisation under contract; managed and provided as a joint venture between the college and other institutions.

Student Support Services Strategy Development

The activities involved in developing and establishing the college's strategy for the provision, management and development of student support services.

Student Support Services Management Planning

The activities involved in developing plans to implement the college's student support services strategy.

Student Support Services Management Performance Management

The activities involved in managing the college's performance against the plans for implementing its student support services strategy.

Activities include: developing performance indicators and measurement mechanisms; measuring, monitoring and analysing performance; conducting formal reviews of performance and responding to the results, including preparing and implementing action plans to address under-performance or other issues raised.

Student Support Services Management Policy Development

The activities involved in developing and establishing the college's policies on the overall management and development of student support services.

Student Support Services Management Procedures Development

The activities involved in developing the college's procedures for the overall management and development of student support services.

Student Support Service Proposal Development

The activities involved in developing and evaluating proposals to set up a student support service.

Activities include: drawing up a preliminary business plan for the proposed service.

Student Support Service Planning

The activities involved in planning the operation, management and development of a student support service.

Student Support Service Performance Management

The activities involved in managing the performance of a student support service.

Activities include: developing performance indicators and measurement mechanisms; measuring, monitoring and analysing performance; conducting formal reviews of performance and responding to the results, including preparing and implementing action plans to address under-performance or other issues raised.

Student Support Service Policy Development

The activities involved in developing and establishing policies for the operation, management and development of a student support service.

Student Support Service Procedures Development

The activities involved in developing procedures for the operation, management and development of a student support service.

Student Support Service Quality Management

The activities involved in ensuring that the quality of a student support service is appropriate and consistently delivered.

Activities include: setting service standards and monitoring performance against these standards through internal measurement and customer feedback.

Student Support Service Promotion

The activities involved in promoting a student support service.

Activities include: designing promotional materials; liaising with specialist internal services for production of promotional materials; distributing promotional materials.

Student Support Service Delivery

The activities involved in delivering a student support service.

The activities will vary according to the service being provided.

Student Support Service Customer Relations Management

The activities involved in managing the college's relationships with students as the customers of a student support service.

Activities include: handling customer complaints; conducting customer surveys.