

Programme Evaluation Report

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| Provider Name: | DBL College | | |
| Provider No. | 38036J & 38116H | | |
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| Manager / Principal / Director Name | Sean Featherstone | | |
| Report Date | July 2007 | | |
| Programme Title | FETAC 5 Business Accounting (BBSXX) | | |
| Report Author(s) | Elaine Cohalan | Head of Business Faculty | |
| External Evaluator | Grainne Seaver | Dorset College | |
| Timeframe covered by Evaluation | From (10/2006) | To (06/2007) | |

Sean Featherstone
 Manager / Principal / Director

04/09/07
 Date

Grainne Seaver
 External Evaluator

04/09/07
 Date

Programme Summary

(a) Programme Name:

FETAC Level 5 Business Accounting.

(b) Programme Aim:

This 2 year programme was designed for international learners in Ireland who wish to study and work in the business world with a particular emphasis on accountancy.

(c) Programme Objectives:

The objectives of this course are to provide learners with general purpose business skills, workplace and IT skills & knowledge as well as specific training in accountancy-related skills.

(d) Programme Modules:

Bookkeeping – Manual & Computerised
Statistics
Marketing Practice
Communications
Accounting – Manual & Computerised
Business Law
Personal Effectiveness in the Workplace
Work – Placement
English as a Second Language

(e) Learner Profile:

The typical learner on this course at DBL College is a non-EU International learner, originating from China, India, Brazil, or Mauritius. The average age of the learners is approximately 24. He / she has spent a couple of years in Ireland on a Student Visa, and has at least an Intermediate level of English (IELTS level 5). The typical learner will also have at least one part time job.

Given the learner profile, we decided to include FETAC level 5 English as a Second Language in the programme and also to run the programme over the course of 2 academic years.

The timetable was also designed to be convenient for a learner with part time work.

(f) Target Awards:

FETAC Level 5 Minor Awards in:

- Bookkeeping – Manual & Computerised
- Statistics
- Marketing Practice
- Communications
- Accounting – Manual & Computerised
- Business Law

- Personal Effectiveness in the Workplace
- Work – Placement
- English as a Second Language

FETAC Level 5 Major Award in:

- Business Studies (BBSXX)

Programme Statistics

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| No. Learners who started in period: | 21 |
| No. Learners who achieved an award in period: | <p>Year 1 semester 1: 2 modules completed per learner: total success of 19/42 (May 2007 Assessment period)</p> <p>Year 1 semester 2: 2 modules completed – to be externally assessed November 2007.</p> |

Evaluation Methodology

The Director of Studies conducted the evaluation of the programme and sent the information to the external evaluator. The external evaluator then met with the Director of Studies in DBL College to discuss the report and make recommendations.

The evaluation was conducted using information gathered from learners, directors of studies, teachers and administrative staff:

Teacher & Director of Studies meetings:

As part of our ongoing Quality Assurance Procedures at DBL College, we conduct regular meetings between teaching staff and Directors of Studies. Any issue that needs further discussion is brought up at our monthly Academic Council Meetings.

Academic Council Meetings:

The Directors of Studies, Principal and Registrar conduct monthly meetings to discuss any issues that may arise in relation to a programme.

Internal Quality Assurance Reports:

DBL College also conducts a formal Quality Assurance procedure every quarter. This involves a full review of facilities, equipment, resources, building security & safety, staff communication procedures, staff structure, course content and quality, teaching quality, learner participation in class etc.

Teacher & Class Observations:

Class Observations were conducted with each individual teacher. The teacher was given a copy of the finding and recommendations which he/she discussed with the Director of Studies.

One to One meetings with Teaching Staff:

One to one meetings between teachers and the directors of studies are arranged for their comments / input.

Questionnaires:

Each learner and member of staff (teaching / administrative) fills out an anonymous questionnaire annually. These surveys questioned their views on course content &

quality, teaching quality, resources and facilities, equipment and what they would like to change.

Suggestion Box:

A suggestion box has been placed in our learner common area to allow us to continually anticipate and facilitate their needs. Staff members are also encouraged to use this.

Executive Summary

Grading Scale:

- 3 = Strength There is plentiful evidence to indicate that achievement in this area is above average. This is an area where practice should be disseminated elsewhere.
- 2 = Acceptable There is evidence that achievement in this area meets expectations. With further development, this could become an area of strength
- 1 = For Improvement There is little or no evidence that achievement in this area meets what is expected. Improvement is needed.

| Policy Area | Average Grade |
|--|---------------|
| Communications | 3 |
| Equality | 3 |
| Staff Recruitment and Development | 2.75 |
| Access, Transfer and Progression | 3 |
| Programme Development, Delivery and Review | 2.88 |
| Fair and Consistent Assessment of Learners | 3 |
| Protection for Learners | 3 |
| Sub Contracting / Procuring Programme Delivery | n/a |

Strengths

- High quality teaching & administrative staff
- Effective structure that allows for input and feedback from all parties
- Good communication between all relevant parties
- Quality assurance practices in place for programme content, delivery and support services.
- High quality equipment & facilities

Areas for Improvement

- Increase in success rate of programme
- More staff development required
- Increased learner participation in continuous assessment
- Increased learner attendance and participation in class

Recommendations

- Teaching and administrative staff to highlight the quality of the course and opportunities that the learner will attain out of it.
- Teachers to employ the use of a variety of techniques to increase class participation.
- More FETAC posters etc to be erected to highlight this also.
- Director of Studies to actively look out for applicable courses and staff developmental opportunities (e.g. teacher workshops).

Detailed Findings

Programme Design and Content

This programme was designed to specifically cater for international learners in Ireland who wish to study and work in the business world with a particular emphasis on accountancy.

The programme runs over two years and includes the level 5 module 'English as a Second Language'. This was decided upon due to DBL's typical learner profile, i.e. a non-EU International learner with an Intermediate or higher level of English who works part time.

Level-specific books and other resources are used in content design. Module content is carefully designed and quality assured by the Director of Studies before it is used in class.

The content of the program focuses on the practical skills & knowledge needs of the learner. On completion of this programme learners are prepared for both further /higher level study in the field and for work in the area.

The design and content of the programme is continually updated to meet the needs of the learners. A variety of programme delivery and design methods are employed to further enhance this.

Information is gathered from the learners via questionnaires, a suggestion box and feedback received through teachers, administration staff and the director of studies. This information is used to continually improve the content and delivery of the programme, and also to ensure that the needs of the learners are being met.

Information and communication regarding content, learner needs, assessment, delivery methods, resources etc. is also continually gathered from teaching staff on the programme. This contributes highly to the overall success and continued improvement of the quality of the programme.

Demand for this programme has steadily increased as learners are made more and more aware of the benefits of such a programme. Many learners suggest the programme to their friends also.

There has been a low drop out rate in this programme as of yet. Upon enrolment and induction learners are informed about the specific details of the programme, i.e. level, content, awards, opportunities on completion etc. This leads to a high level of understanding of the programme before commencement, and hence reduces drop out rates.

Strengths

- High quality staff & resources used in content design
- All content is quality assured before it is used in class
- Content focused on practical skills & knowledge
- Learners have excellent access to high quality staff
- Environment and facilities conducive to success.

Areas for Improvement

- More open access to resources could be made available to learners.

Recommendations

- Open access to a bigger library of course related books to be made available to learners.
- Class outlines and notes to be made available on learner intranet system.
- Learners to have access to photocopier & printer.

Programme Delivery

The programme is delivered by hand-picked expert staff in small tutorial-style classes. Use of activities, practical's, exercises etc are highly encouraged and access to facilities and equipment to do so are readily available.

Staff are highly qualified and continually encouraged to use a variety of methods that contribute to the success of the class. They are also encouraged to contribute their own recommendations, materials etc to the programme.

Programme content is adapted to meet the needs of learners, e.g. through use of dictionaries and glossaries to help overcome their language barriers, through use of international examples that they would be familiar with to explain concepts. Tutors also focus on attaining examples of the learner's experience and knowledge to help explain concepts.

All programme content is evaluated and quality assured by the director of studies before it is used in class.

Teaching staff are subject to at least one class observation during the year where recommendations were made by the coordinator.

Teaching staff adapt the class to the specific needs of the group if the need arises. Any specific issues that come about (e.g. specific / diverse needs) are noted by the teacher. The teacher speaks to the Director of Studies for advice on how to meet these needs.

Staff development works extremely well within the DBL network. Teaching staff continually support each other and are continually supported by the director of studies. Any content questions or queries that cannot be answered by the director of studies are referred to FETAC. If there were course days / training days available through FETAC or recommended by FETAC this would further enhance this process.

Teaching staff are therefore continually supported by the director of studies to ensure they are confident and content in their roles.

Learners are continuously informed of their progress through series of in class exercises, tests etc.

Learners are given exercises to complete at home and are constantly encouraged to relay their own experiences in class. Learners are given course notes and DBL College folders in which to store them. All learners have open free access to computers with internet access to facilitate further research. This is done to help encourage learners to take interest in the programme and to take responsibility for their own learning.

The timetable is designed to facilitate learners who work part time. Learners get a short break after each class to ensure an optimal and practical learning environment is maintained.

The specific needs of learners are further catered for through employment of high quality equipment, facilities and resources.

Learners have excellent access to administration staff (8.30am-6.30pm daily), their teachers (before and after class times) and the director of studies (office hours) for any questions or queries they may have. Information is made available through the college's website and via hard copy in the reception office.

Each module is reviewed at the end of a semester. The Director of Studies meets with the teacher(s) involved and recommendations and suggestions are considered and implemented where appropriate. Teachers are continually encouraged to add their own content to the programme if they feel it would benefit the programme positively. This is open for discussion with the director of studies and other teachers at monthly staff meetings.

The College holds graduation ceremonies annually. Learners who were successful in their modules and courses receive their certificates at this ceremony.

Strengths

- Teaching staff receive excellent and continual support and have excellent facilities, equipment and resources available to them.

- An effective quality assurance process ensures excellent content and delivery.
- The needs of learners are continually assessed and monitored to ensure delivery is of optimal level.
- Learners receive constant and open access to administrative support and course information.
- The timetable is specifically designed to meet the needs of the learner.

Areas for Improvement

- More access to external training and course days for staff
- More open access to resources to be made available to learners

Recommendations

- Director of Studies to actively seek tutor training opportunities.
- Open access to a bigger library of course related books to be made available to learners.
- Class outlines and notes to be made available on learner intranet system.

Assessment of Learning

Administration and registration of learners performed and managed through the use of a specifically designed database system. This system is accessible to all administration and management staff. The database holds records of each learner (uniquely identified by learner numbers). Each record maintains the following information on the learner:

- Name
- Address
- Telephone Number
- All courses they have enrolled on
- Their % attendance on all courses
- Modules they are scheduled on.
- Days they attended class
- Examination results
- Visa Details etc.

This system is backed up daily on the college's server and works very effectively.

Records of Assessment are maintained securely on the college's database system (soft copy). Hard copies of all portfolios and summary sheets are also maintained in a locked cabinet in the main office for a minimum of 2 years.

All reports from external examiners are reviewed at the next Academic Council Meeting. Appropriate action is then decided if required.

Assessment is module specific and outlined by the FETAC's module descriptors. Assessment includes assignments, skills demonstrations, projects, role-plays, interviews, examinations, presentations, research and data collection etc. These assessment techniques are conducive to success with the college's learner profile.

Learners are fully briefed at the outset of each module as to how it will be assessed. At the end of each semester, the Director of Studies ensures that all learner portfolios are presented in order, marks are tallied up correctly, and that all work submitted is accounted for. The college's teachers then take part in DBL's internal invigilation process; where they correct the randomly sampled learner portfolios of their peers.

Examination dates and final dates for portfolio submission are set out and published on the notice boards by the Director of Studies at the start of each term. In class assessments, presentation, skills demonstrations etc are scheduled by the class teacher.

As outlined in the college's Access Transfer and Progression policy; where a learner has evidence of prior achievement relative to the programme, it is recognised before entry into that programme. In certain circumstances, credit, examination exemption or direct entry into a particular examination can be awarded for prior learning.

The standard of achievement by learners on this programme at this stage approximately stands at a 50% pass rate. The learner profile is seen to be a contributor to a percentage of the failure rate, i.e. language barrier, learners sometimes prioritising work over their studies etc.

Where a learner has a disability that will impact on their ability to complete their assessment, support is provided by the college or alternative methods are designed (with the agreement of the awarding body).

Strengths

- Assessment appropriate to module and to the learner.
- The college has a reliable internal invigilation process in place that ensures standards are consistent.

- Responsive system in place to deal with any input from external assessment.
- Secure and efficient in-house database system in use to hold learner records, examination results etc.
- Learners and tutors made aware of assessment schedule at the beginning of each semester.

Areas for Improvement

- Standard of achievement needs to be maintained and improved where possible.

Recommendations

- Teaching and administrative staff to highlight the quality of the course and opportunities that the learner will attain out of it and hence encourage learners to take more interest in achieving success.

Associated Services and Resourcing

Staff are equipped with module descriptors, course books, course plans, course schedules and examination schedules for each module they teach.

Preparation of module notes, handouts, exercises, assignments etc takes place before the semester commences. Additional materials and resources can be procured at this stage where required. This material is quality assured by the Director of Studies before it can be used in the teaching of the class. Any questions / queries on programme content can be resolved at this stage.

Staff have access to a library of resources in the college and can request for additional resources to be procured where necessary.

Staff have access to a pc in the staff room (which also has online access), printers, and photocopiers. Staff are also equipped with laptops. These can be used deliver classes via PowerPoint, show online examples / exercises etc. The college contains 5 classrooms are equipped to deliver audio-visual presentations (i.e. with projectors & interactive screens).

There are 2 computer labs in the college. Where necessary, classes are scheduled to take place in a computer lab (the module teacher and director of studies discuss this before the semester begins). Where available, these labs can also be booked by teachers if required for individual classes.

Learners have access to a library with course related resources in the college. Learners on all our FETAC programmes have access to both computer labs during class and at allotted open-access times.

All facilities in the college are new and safely maintained. Fire exits and extinguishers are scattered throughout the building in allocated areas. First aid kits are maintained at 3 locations. Equipment is continually monitored and maintained.

Strengths

- Staff are fully equipped with resources, facilities and equipment to deliver high quality classes and can request additional resources where necessary.
- Learners have access to excellent resources, facilities and equipment that enhances their learning experience and encourages high achievement.
- Learners and teaching staff have excellent daily access to administrative staff and to the director of studies for continual and ongoing support.
- All resources and facilities are up to date, well maintained and safe.

Areas for Improvement

- Learners and staff to have more enhanced access course related resources.

Recommendations

- Intranet system to be devised and set up to accommodate both learners and staff with resources needed, timetables, module descriptors, marking sheets, reading lists, associated links etc.

Attainment of Programme Objectives

The overall aim of this programme is to provide learners with the abilities and skills required to work or study in the Business Accounting field. To achieve this, the programme was designed to provide learners with:

- General purpose business skills,
- Workplace skills
- IT skills & knowledge &
- Specific training in accountancy-related skills

The objectives are achieved through ensuring the following:

- High quality qualified and experienced teaching staff are employed.
- Quality resources, facilities, equipment and support are available to staff and learners.
- An open communicative environment is maintained. Learners and staff are asked and encouraged to provide feedback and suggestions to ensure continual improvement to the programme and to ensure the needs of the learners are being met.
- Programme and module content is continually quality assured to ensure it meets with FETAC standards.

When a learner enquires about enrolling for a course, the course content, level, direction and objectives are clearly explained to them. If this matches with their specific requirements / needs, they are encouraged to enrol for the course. When it doesn't match, they are encouraged to enrol on a more appropriate programme. This ensures a very low drop out rate.

The specific programme objectives are also clearly stated on all marketing material on the programme.

Learners who drop out of the programme generally do so due to their own changing requirements, e.g. they cannot commit the time (continuous assessment, skills, assignments, projects etc) to the programme any longer)

Demand for the programme is still quite evident, and enrolment of new learners has already begun for the October 2007 term.

Learners who have completed year 1 of the programme are also enrolling for their second year at a high rate.

As the same ideology has been applied to all programmes and groups (high quality staff, support, facilities, services, quality assurance, feedback mechanisms etc), attainment levels has tended to be similar across all groups.

Conclusions:

- The design and structure of this programme is meeting the specific needs of the learners involved.
- Success rate is high and the future of the programme looks bright.