7. Teaching & Learning

Version	Description of Amendments	Approval Date	Implementation Date
1.0	Original Draft copy of QA Guidelines	18/05/2018	18/05/2018
2.0	Re-engagement process		
2.1	Addition of Blended Learning Policy 7.3	16/10/2023	3/11/2023
2.2	Amendments to 7.4.2 text added	16/10/2023	3/11/2023
2.2	Online Assessments added 7.4.4.1	16/10/2023	3/11/2023
2.2	Blended Learning Support added 7.7.1	16/10/2023	3/11/2023

Policy Title   **Teaching & Learning**

Date Approved   17/12/2018

Effective From   02/01/2019

Monitor   Dean of Academic Affairs / QA Committee

Summary   This policy provides an overview of the policies directly related to the teaching and learning activities of the College. This encapsulates both the learning experience and the learning environment offered by the College.

Related Policies

Revision History &   Version 1 – 2019

Commencement Date & Date of Next Review   Commencement Date (Version 1): 02/01/2020

Date of Next Review: Following Independent Assessment from Re-engagement process

Purpose   The purpose of this policy is to provide an overarching framework to ensure the quality of the learning experience offered by the College. The learning experience is inclusive of the learning facilitated in the classroom (and supplemented through the College's Virtual Learning Environment, Moodle), how programmes are taught and delivered by the College, as well as the learning environment offered by the College. This policy will also provide clarity of the College's provision to its learners.

Scope   This policy applies to all assessments as part of the Further Education and Higher Education programmes as well as English Language education at Dorset College.

Policy Statement   Dorset College recognises that the teaching & learning of its programmes is integral to its educational provision. Therefore, the College is cognisant of the need to ensure that it maintains a high standard of teaching and learning. It is also cognisant of the importance of its learning experience and environment, which support the teaching and learning efforts of the College.

Monitoring the Learning Experience

The maintenance of the quality of the learning experience is central to the ethos of the College. To ensure this, the College recognises the need to continuously monitor and improve the learner experience that it offers.

The College will monitor its learning experience as follows:

- Quantitative feedback, by way of anonymous survey, from learners twice per semester; mid-way and at the end of each semester;
- Qualitative feedback from class representatives once per semester;
- Faculty feedback collected through Programme Boards and quantitative feedback for example an anonymous survey twice yearly;
- Technical assessment of the virtual learning environment twice per year;
- Feedback received in the External Examiner's Report(s);
- Review of the College's Teaching, Learning & Assessment strategy once per year. Furthermore, the College will ensure that it is kept abreast of developments in the area of teaching & learning by ensuring its staff interact with relevant communities of practice. This may entail one or more of the following on an annual basis:
- Staff and/or faculty attending conferences on teaching & learning. Such as those hosted by HECA, National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning, and the International Conference on Engaging Pedagogy.Staff and/or faculty presenting papers at conferences on teaching & learning. Such as those hosted by HECA, National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning, and the International Conference on Engaging Pedagogy.
- Staff and/or faculty reviewing contemporary literature on teaching & learning.
- The College facilitating a workshop on teaching & learning approaches for staff and faculty.

Teaching, Learning & Assessment Strategy

Dorset College engenders internal provider driven quality assurance in the provision of Higher Education Programmes as validated by QQI.

The College currently adopts a predominantly face-to-face teaching approach that is complemented by its virtual learning environment (VLE) MOODLE. The College is committed to the continuing adoption of technology to enhance its Teaching and Learning approach. Its current use of technology is largely confined to its VLE, which acts as a support mechanism for its face-to-face teaching approach.

Dorset College is committed to developing a strategy on digitally enhanced learning as part of the overall development of the College. The College will engage with relevant stakeholders to ensure that any such development is appropriate and relevant to the particular field of learning and learner and is in line with College Mission and Values.

The College adopts a varied teaching and learning strategy that is intended to engage learners in a variety of ways, and adopt strategies that are level and programme appropriate. The College also views the assessment used for individual modules as a means to support the overarching teaching

and learning strategy of the programme. The discussion hereunder provides an outline of the overarching teaching and learning strategy for a programme, and how the assessment strategy supports same. The teaching and learning strategy for each module will also be outlined in the individual module descriptors.

The College adopts a teaching, learning and assessment strategy which is reflective of the NFQ i.e. knowledge, know-how, skills and competencies and ensures teaching, learning and assessment is constructively aligned with Minimum Intended Module Learning Outcomes (MIMLOs), Minimum Intended Programme Learning Outcomes (MIPLOs) and Award Standards

The overarching Teaching, Learning, and Assessment (TLA) Strategy of the College is guided by four core areas:
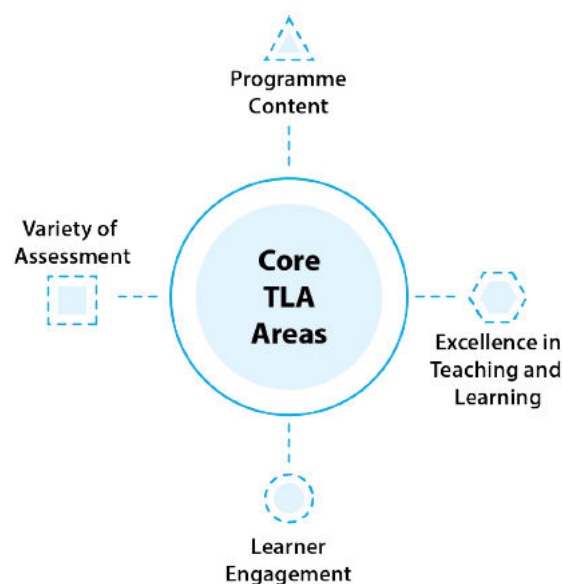
Blended Learning Policy

Policy Title	Blended Learning Policy
Date Approved	16/10/2023
Effective From	01/01/2024
Monitor	Registrar / Dean of Academic Affairs and QA Committee
Summary	This policy was informed by the QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes, March 2018 v1. This policy reflects the experience and developments in delivering blended learning programmes at Dorset College in response to the Pandemic event (2020 to 2022). The guidelines below are in line with the QQI Core Statutory QA Guidelines published in April 2016, and specifically focus on quality assurance matters pertaining to blended learning provision.
Related Policies	Teaching & Learning Version 1 – 2019
Revision History & Commencement Date & Date of Next Review	Version 1: 01/09/2020, Commencement Date (Version 1): 01/01/2024 Ongoing subject to QA policy for review

Purpose	The purpose of this policy is to provide an overarching framework to ensure the quality of the learning experience offered by the College using blended learning. This learning experience is inclusive of the learning facilitated in the classroom and Online through the College's Virtual Learning Environment, Zoom and Moodle, how programmes are taught and delivered by the College, as well as the learning environment offered by the College. This policy will also provide clarity of the College's provision of Blended Learning to its learners.
Scope	This policy applies to all delivery and assessments in Further Education and Higher Education programmes at Dorset College.
Policy Statement	Dorset College recognises that the blended learning is integral to its educational provision. The College is cognisant of the need to ensure that it maintains a high standard of teaching and learning. It is also cognisant of the importance of the learning experience and environment, which support the teaching and learning efforts of the College.

Dorset College Blended Learning Description

Blended learning involves the delivery of teaching, learning and assessment through both synchronous and asynchronous learning approaches. Consideration is made for pedagogical teaching, learning and assessment strategies suitable for live online (or on-campus) classroom sessions, and for activities that can be carried out by the learner in their own time, and at their own pace. Our blended learning programme development initiatives will consider the following:

a. The development of online learning material suitable for effective and engaging synchronous and asynchronous delivery.
b. Consideration for access to new and existing learning technologies, and the development of existing platforms such as our Virtual Learning Environment.
c. Tools and resources to facilitate synchronous and asynchronous peer interaction and learning, for example, discussion forums and virtual group spaces.
d. Online tools to support, enable and deliver formative and summative assessment.

Blended learning: "Blended Learning refers to a type of programme where teaching, learning and assessment occur using a mix of on-site and online learning, with the online components taking place synchronously, asynchronously, or in combination" as defined by QQI (2023, p. 9) in the Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended and Fully Online Programmes

Institutional Role

 The Dorset Senior Management Team is responsible for ensuring that all proposed developments are aligned with the strategic intentions of the College. This is articulated in our Strategic Plan, underpinned by appropriate investment plans, and specified timeframes for implementation. The strategic plan includes development of new programmes, including Blended Learning programmes. The Academic Council retains responsibility for academic oversight and governance of all programmes, proposed and current, including those delivered through blended learning.

Dorset College will strategically develop blended learning provision in line with best practice. The following procedures are in place to maintain and enhance our planning and development for blended learning:

a. Dorset College will continue to invest in appropriate infrastructure and technology resources to support blended learning provision, including enhancements to our Virtual Learning Environment.
b. Teaching staff will be afforded professional development training for teaching and learning strategies specific to blended learning.
c. Compliance with legal obligations will be appropriately considered for blended learning contexts, including GDPR, professional and statutory body requirements.
d. Resource implications will be factored into all programme development initiatives and will be subject to approval by Dorset College Academic Council and the Senior Leadership team.
e. Academic integrity initiatives will be further developed to ensure that learners' work is properly attributed to them, particularly for assessment that is conducted through remote assessment means.
f. External consultants with expertise in blended learning provision will be considered in all blended learning programme development initiatives.

Programme Development and Assessment

Programmes designed by Dorset College as blended learning programmes will satisfy the quality assurance guidelines of QQI and the policies and procedures of Dorset College. In doing so, they shall satisfy the academic quality and standards required of all Dorset College programmes leading to QQI awards. These programmes will further reflect the underpinning concepts outlined within Dorset Colleges overarching Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy.

The use of technologies within programme delivery is determined by the Programme Development Team in the context of the best suited pedagogic approach for the discipline, programme level, award type, target learners and available technologies. The existing quality assurance policies and procedures of Dorset College, as approved by QQI, remain applicable in all instances.

To achieve effective blended learning provision, the Programme Development Team will actively address the following:

a. Teaching and learning practices will be informed by best practice in blended learning provision (i.e. published work from the National Forum, including universal and instructional design)
b. Approval mechanisms for curriculum content for synchronous and asynchronous elements will be subject to internal approval and ongoing quality assurance.
c. Assessment strategies will create opportunities for learners to engage in formative assessment activities to reinforce learning remotely.
d. Curriculum development will be learner centred and will be subject-led rather than technology-led (technology will serve pedagogy). Development will be student-centred and synchronous and asynchronous interactive learning experiences will be designed for each programme module.
e. Different media delivery models will be considered for learning approaches, with consideration for an accessible and inclusive learner experience.
f. Clear information will be provided to the learner regarding the nature of the blend within each module, the technologies, and tools to be used, and the expectation of attendance and activity throughout the programme.

g. Summative assessment design will incorporate best practice academic integrity principles to minimise academic impropriety (i.e. published work by the National and Global Academic Integrity Networks).

h. Blended learning programme development will be subject to the Dorset College programme development policies, procedures, and approval mechanisms.

Learner Experience of Blended Learning

The learner experience is an integral focus for the provision of a student-centred blended learning approach. Blended learning approaches may be new to some learners. It is therefore important to clearly highlight how blended learning may differ from previous learning experiences. This will ensure learners are prepared through a statement of motivation and engagement. The following procedures will be put in place to ensure the learner is well supported and well informed.

a. Appropriate information will be made available to the prospective learner that adequately explains the blend of learning between face to face and online learning (synchronous and asynchronous), that they will experience, and the realistic time commitment required of them to engage and succeed on the programme.

b. Clear prerequisite knowledge and technological skills required to participate on the programme will be presented. Information on broadband, software and hardware specifications will be outlined.

c. Student monitoring and support mechanisms for blended learning provision remain in place since the pandemic, including appropriate interventions to identify learners who may be struggling with online/remote learning programme elements.

d. To ensure maximum student engagement the Zoom Etiquette policy is included in the Student Handbook which each student receives at the beginning of the course.

e. Orientation will be provided through a series of sessions to outline support and learning resources, for blended learning, including relevant key staff contact information.

f. Teaching and learning resources for online learning elements will meet Dorset College specified expectations around equality of opportunity, interactivity, and autonomous learning.

Evaluation of Blended Learning

Evaluation of Blended Learning provision will align to the already established Dorset College Evaluation, Feedback and Monitoring protocols. Feedback will be sought from programme administration and support staff, teachers, and learners through on-going feedback processes (Programme Boards, Student Surveys etc.). In addition, feedback will be sought from external examiners to ensure the integrity of assessment is maintained in an online environment. Evaluation outcomes will feed back into new blended learning programme development initiatives led by the Programme Development Team.

The Core Teaching, Learning, and Assessment areas

Programme Content

The College endeavours to ensure that the content of its programmes is both engaging and challenging, and also cognisant of the skills that will be of assistance to learners for employability upon graduation. To ensure that its programme content achieves this, the College initially develops its MIPLOs, which are informed by the appropriate awards standards. These MIPLOs then inform a programme's MIMLOs, which should align to the MIPLOs. The College is also conscious that the MIMLOs are both theoretically aware, and practically applied – that is, a programme's modules are built on a foundation of ensuring the learner is aware of the requisite theoretical arguments/perspectives within a disciplinary area, but also is exposed to how such theoretical perspectives are practically applied in work-based scenarios.

Programme Content Goals

1. To ensure that MIMLOs and MIPLOs are benchmarked against those of other leading educational institutions;
2. To ensure that modules are theoretically informed and practically applied in line with Award Standards and the NFQ; and
3. To facilitate stakeholder input: learner, employers, lead academics and graduates into the devising of a programme content.

Excellence in Teaching and Learning

The College recognises that its faculty should not only be well-informed in their disciplinary area, and thus, a module's content, but they should also be well-informed on best practice with regards the delivery of such content. Therefore, the College endeavours to ensure that its faculty are informed on Teaching and Learning theories, and on the variety of potentially effective teaching strategies. The College is also aware that ensuring that its faculty have the requisite knowledge in this area will involve staff professional development. Therefore, the College has committed to providing financial support for some of its faculty to undertake a Masters' in Teaching and Learning and facilitates members of its faculty to attain the digital badge in Teaching Strategies.

With the addition of Blended Learning programmes the college requires the Faculty to enhance their own knowledge, skills and competence in new digital technology. Support from the college is provided to help all staff train and learn the new technology.

Teaching and Learning Goals

1. To ensure that faculty are informed of teaching and learning theories, and effective teaching strategies.
2. To facilitate faculty in furthering their knowledge in this area, through providing continuous professional development opportunities.

Learner Engagement

The level of engagement from learners is key to ensuring that the educational experience that they have during their studies in the College is a fulfilling one. The transition from purely didactic to a more interactive learning environment has as a prerequisite, an engaged learner body. The College is keen to harness the potential of such a learning environment but facilitating as much engagement as possible with its learners.

In the blended learning environment attendance is very important, for student engagement and learning. The student handbook contains the Zoom Etiquette policy which specifies what is expected from students online. This handbook is given to each student at the beginning of their course.

Learner Engagement Goals

1. To provide an engaging and challenging programme content, delivered through engaging teaching and learning strategies.
2. To explore how technology can be used both inside and outside the classroom to enhance learner engagement.
3. To ensure an emphasis on employability skills, particularly in the award year of a programme.
4. To explore how a 'learner voice' could be further incorporated into various aspects of a programme, such as indicative syllabus and assessment to ensure collaborative learning.

Variety of Assessment

As educational programmes continue to move towards being structured through learning outcomes, a by-product of this has been the assessment of the learning outcomes. This has led to an increasing focus on the assessment instruments by learners, as performance in such instruments tend to be the key tangible outcome that is recognised from a programme of learning. Aside from the worthy debate as to whether this is appropriate, it has resulted in an increasing focus on assessment. The College is conscious to ensure that the assessment instruments that it uses on all programmes are appropriate at the module level, but also cohesive at the programme level. Further to these key considerations, the College is also conscious that the learner workload is appropriate but not overly arduous, and that a variety of assessment instruments are utilised. To ensure the former, the College is guided by the notional learning hours detailed within the ECTS credit system, and for the latter, the College is cognisant of not over-using some instruments and disregarding others – for example, the College recognises the value of the examination as an assessment instrument but is conscious of an over-reliance on examinations.

Online Assessment for Blended Learning Programmes

For Blended Learning programmes assessments will be online. These assessments may involve completing online exams, submitting files online via the VLE or completing a live assessment. Managing the process of validating learners' work and verifying their participation is key to ensuring the integrity of the assessment process and of the programme. Incorporating digital technology can facilitate faculty to implement an assessment strategy in line with Dorset College's current Assessment Policy.

Verifying Assessment Validity

The development of online assessments can be challenging in a blended programme because assessment is underpinned by the learning outcomes, academic policy, level of course, and available assessment resources. Using appropriate technologies and implementing strategies to validate online assessment is a critical component for the academic validity of a programme or module. It is necessary that assessment arrangements and instruments conducted through online learning are reliable, secure, effective, fair and provide learners with appropriate confidential feedback on their progress.

QQI's guidelines on blended learning programmes state the need to provide robust and consistent systems and processes across the organisation to manage the submission, receipt, marking and return of assessments. As part of the programme design process, lecturing staff need to consider which assessment type and digital technology is most effective and ensure that there are robust arrangements in place across the organisation to confirm the identity of remote learners and mitigate against fraudulent practices.

To confirm that a learners assessment work is their original work the following criteria for assessment will apply:
- clear and consistent statements about identity verification and fraud, and the responsibilities risks, and outcomes associated with any breaches of Academic Integrity & Plagiarism policies for a learner are included in each student programme handbook as well as being available on the VLE.
- online assignment submissions should incorporate the following:
  - o learners must confirm authenticity of own work by selecting an honesty and non-plagiarism box on each submission.
  - o learners verify their identity by logging into Dorset College's VLE for the submission of assignments and for the completion of assessments.
  - o learners work must be validated using Turnitin software to check for plagiarism and the use of AI.
- online assessments or examinations should include the following practices:
  - o clear instructions including a written protocol should be issued for live assessment.

  - o **The protocol should cover key elements such as:**
    - ▪ webcam must be turned on
    - ▪ the desk must be clear
    - ▪ the learner must pick up their laptop and webcam and show the table to an invigilator
    - ▪ the desktop must be shared to allow the assessor to see if access to online sites or files occurs.

- learners verify their identity by logging into the Dorset College VLE for the submission of live assessment
- digital mechanisms for the transfer of learners' work directly to assessors must be approved and tested by the college to ensure they are secure and reliable
- there is an institutionally approved and consistent means of providing and confirming the safe receipt of the students work

Assessment Goals

- To ensure a variety of assessments are utilised at each stage of a programme;
- To recommend learners have a proportionate number of examinations within the overall context of the MIPLO's and the programme assessment strategy;
- To ensure the learner's assessment workload is both challenging and balanced at each stage of a programme;
- To encourage learners to attempt all elements of an individual module assessment strategy with a view to passing the module overall.

To ensure that its teaching and learning approach maintains its currency, the College will:

- monitor its teaching and learning approach on an annual basis. This monitoring will incorporate learner feedback and lecturer feedback on existing and new approaches to teaching and learning adopted by the College. It will also review assessment marks, attendance and participation at classes where a new teaching and learning approach is adopted.
- send a contingent of its staff to conferences on teaching and learning annually.
- facilitate at least one teaching and learning workshop for its faculty annually.

Assessment & Moderation - Assessment-Role of Examiners

A member of Dorset College faculty allocated responsibility for assessing learners shall be deemed to be an examiner. The Examiner is assisted by a second member of faculty, a moderator. The examiner's role is to:

- Prepare assessments in consultation with the Moderator (please see page 125), in accordance with the approved module descriptor, learning outcomes and aligned to the level and MIPLOs;
- Submit examination papers, solutions and marking schemes, in consultation with the Moderator, to the Examinations Office where they are forwarded to the External Examiner(s);
- Alongside the Programme Leader, take account of suggestions, deletions, additions or amendments proposed by the External Examiner (s) and implement as recommended or provide a rationale for non-implementation
- Mark the assessments and arrange for moderation within the College time-frames and submit marks to the Examinations Team via the means specified; Moodle;

- Prepare a sample of marked continuous assessment, in conjunction with the moderator, for the External Examiner and return to Examinations Team or ensure appropriate access to Moodle for review of course-work, grades and feedback;
- Return scripts and any associated forms to the Examinations Office;
- Receive feedback from the External Examiner(s) and, in conjunction with the Programme Leader agree the marks being awarded to each candidate (prior to the meeting of the Board of Examiners);
- Attend meetings of the Examination Board, to verify marks and contribute to the deliberation of grades and awards.

Assessment-Role of Moderator

A Moderator is appointed for each module by the Dean of Academic Affairs and the relevant Programme Leader.

Any such appointment is made on the basis of experience as an educator in the particular subject or a related area, normally including at least 2 years teaching and assessment or other curriculum-related experience within the last 5 years at the same level on the framework as the subject which is being moderated.

The moderation process is to ensure assessment practices and decisions are regularly sampled and evaluated, and findings are acted upon to ensure consistency and fairness to each learner.

The Moderator works closely with the Examiner in a monitoring/advisory role to ensure:

Assessment is appropriate, consistent, fair and transparent and does not discriminate against any learner;

- Assessment has been set in line with learning outcomes of the module;
- An assessment has been marked in line with the expressed aims and learning outcomes of the assignment/examination, and in terms of marking criteria fairness of marking and the equality of treatment of each learner;
- Internal consistency of assessment within a module;
- Comparability of standards across modules within a subject area;
- Assessment is appropriate to the level at which it is taught;
- A detailed guide to assessment and moderation is provided to each member of faculty

Teaching and Learning - Further Education

Dorset College engenders internal provider driven quality assurance in the provision of Further Education by ensuring our mechanisms and procedure adopted are quality assured and driven by our stakeholders (faculty, learner, employers, alumni and relevant work-based training entities) to achieve the appropriate learning outcomes through planning, expertise, resources and commitment by Dorset College to excellence in learning through continuous improvement Self-evaluation and careful monitoring of each programme and in this instance Further Education is crucial in ensuring the quality of such programmes as delivered by Dorset College is effective and embraces ongoing improvements to teaching, learning and assessment.

Dorset College monitors the learning experience of all learners by conducting the following;

- Learner surveys;
- Learner Focus Groups;
- Faculty/tutor feedback (Formal by way of anonymous survey, non-formal by way of Programme Team Meetings and informal by way of open communication with the Dean of Academic Affairs and the Programme Leader for a particular programme);

Surveys include questions which relate to:

- Programme Content;
- Delivery Modes;
- Teaching and Learning and Teaching Modes;
- Assessment;
- Information and Support Services.
- Learner Supports
- Learning Resources

All learners are provided, at induction, with a Learner Handbook and a bespoke Programme Handbook for a particular programme which includes the following information:

- Programme Content and resources
- Facilities; Library, Canteen, Printing
- Learner Support; Student Experience Leader, Exam supports etc.
- Programme Team and points of contact for example academic operations, librarian, programme leader
- Learners who undertake a course in Further Education are offered academic support by our Head of Library, IS and Enhancement through referencing classes and one-to-one sessions throughout the academic year.
- All learners are encouraged to develop their employability by partaking in Dorset College Jobs Club, Clubs and Societies as well as social trips.

Assessment & Verification - Further Education

Dorset College is committed to authentic, fair and transparent assessment of all learners and in this instance that of learners undertaking a course in Further Education in line with national standards to ensure learners are informed of the expected outcomes and their progress in achieving them.

Dorset College in an effort to ensure assessment is understood by staff and learners ensures that staff are trained on an ongoing basis and the learner is brought through the programme at the admission stage by way of interview, at induction and by the module leader in conjunction with the relevant programme leader.

Staff and learners will be familiarised by way of Programme Handbook, Learner Handbook provided at induction with the following:

- Assessment instruments and schedules;
- Expected Certification date specifically should the programme entitle a learner to apply for Higher Education through the CAO;
- Assessment Briefs and Grading Criteria;
- Appeals;
- Repeats;
- Learner Supports available;
- Assessment and Workplace Assessment;
- Award Classifications.

Assessment Verification & Authentication - Further Education

Internal Verification

Dorset College relies on a system of Internal Verification (IV) for all assessments which are undertaken as part of a module within a Further Education (FE) Programme and is completed prior to the submission of marks to QBS for provisional results and External Authentication. IV ensures fairness and consistency across the grade brackets and ensures the accuracy of assessment outcomes and marks reports are verified by a person other than the internal examiner/module leader.

Dorset College ensures the individual undertaking IV is appropriately trained and carries out the following checks prior to External Authentication;

- Missing assessments or part(s) thereof;
- Missing or inappropriate assessment briefs;
- Omissions, errors in relation to grades or learner data;
- Inaccuracies with regards to data entry such as award codes, results etc.
- Grading inconsistencies between assessors.

External Authentication

Dorset College ensures that all assessments and grades thereto are externally authenticated after the completion of IV by the College to ensure objective and authoritative confirmation of level appropriate, authentic, fair and consistent assessment for all learners across all modules comprising a programme.

Dorset College ensures the appropriate external authenticator has access to all IV reports and provisional results as generated by the Exams Officer prior to the EA visit to authenticate results.

Results Verification & Process - Further Education

Results Verification

Once External Authentication has taken place the results are formally approved by a results approval panel comprising;

- Exams Officer
- Programme Leader
- Module Leader
- Internal Verifier

Marks are then sent forward by the Exams Office to QQI via QBS for official certification. After each assessment period there is a programme team meeting to ensure the learner outcomes are in line with the Programme Learning Outcomes and Module Learning Outcomes and do a comparative grade analysis and to ensure appropriate feedback is provided to all learners.

1.1.1.1   Process

- Module Leader submits their assessments and marks sheets for IV at least four weeks
- prior to submission of marks to QQI;
- IV process takes place and is to be completed at least 10 days prior to EA;
- Provisional Results (PR) are generated by the Exams Officer and released to learners;
- Learners are advised of their right of appeal within 4 days of the release of PR;
- EA verifies the results pursuant to a site visit and review of coursework, IV Reports,
- Provisional Results and Authentication Reports
- Marks are put forward for Certification to QQI via QBS by the Exams Officer.

1.1.1.2   Group Work Policy

Group Work is a vital component of each programme engendering a cohesive and collaborative learning environment which ensures our learners acquire and self-direct their skills and competencies and acquire invaluable graduate attributes.

Group Work ensures competencies such as team-work, active learning and a reflective practice are an integrative part of module assessment ensuring the achievement and constructive alignment of assessment; in this instance group work, to Minimum Intended Module Learning

Outcomes (MIMLOs) and Minimum Intended Programme Learning Outcomes (MIPLOs) within the overall context of the specific programme.

Each programme team, through team meetings, will ensure that the level of group work is level appropriate to the MIMLOs and respective MIPLOs and is achievable and supported by a clear assessment schedule which is to be made available to learners at induction and managed carefully by the Academic Operations Lead in conjunction with faculty.

Group Work refers to where two or more learners work together as part of formative and summative assessment. (Note: Only summative assessment is credit bearing as per Dorset College Policy on assessment).

Dorset College categorise Group Work as learner-led or lecturer-led, and whatever method is used, the learner should be advised of the rationale and how this relates to the level (for example Level 6) and the overall construct of the module and the related MIMLOs as aligned to the MIPLOs of the programme. The programme team will look at the advantages and disadvantages of each approach.

Teacher-Led		Learner-Led	
Advantages	Disadvantages	Advantages	Disadvantages
Closely aligned employment scenario	Feelings of loss and control	Increases motivation	May lead to different levels or perceptions regarding individual contributions
Stimulates diverse Groups and Learning Experiences	Lecturers may not be aware of Inter-Personal Issues	Creates friendships and alliances within a group	Learners may see power struggles emerging and learner exclusion

1.1.1.3 Assessment Goals

1. To achieve authentic, reliable and valid assessments at each stage of the programme.
2. To ensure a variety of assessments are utilised at each stage of a programme.
3. To require learners to attempt all elements of an individual module assessment strategy.

1.1.1.4 Grading

To ensure group-work is fair, authentic and consistent Dorset College requires the group, either self-selecting or selected by the lecturer as appropriate, to submit a single product or piece of work (artefact or report) but each group member also submits an individual piece that reflects on the process and their learning. Marks are typically a combination of the group work and individual piece.

1.1.1.5   Conflict

The programme team are mindful of learner conflict within a group and learners often provide formal (through class representative meetings) and informally to lecturers, academic operations or the Student Experience Leader, that they are having difficulty within a group and this is typically linked to contributions or engagement by one learner or another to the group.

The programme team endeavour to conciliate but advise the group that conflict is inherent in all group projects and it is part of the assessment to self-manage the group dynamic.

The programme or a particular member of faculty in conjunction with the Academic Team will exercise academic judgment should such conflict compromise the assessment and may intervene in a more formal way. Formal intervention may include but is not limited to the following:

1. Speaking with the particular learners;
2. Encouraging the learner to log such conflict in their learning journal in a professional manner;
3. Re-constituting a group if the conflict cannot be resolved.
4. Should a group's number fall below two the programme team will look to an alternative assessment which meets the MIMLOs of a particular module ensuring there is no disadvantage for the affected learner.

1.1.1.6   Learner Support

Dorset College aims to foster a diverse learning environment where the learner' is supported to ensure an equal learning environment without barriers with dignity and respect at the core of all teaching, learning and assessment.

Dorset College provides a number of opportunities to applicant's and learners to advise the college of any required learning supports from the application stage or indeed any any stage throughout the academic year to ensure appropriate progression from a particular programme for example;

-   College Website
-   Application form;
-   Induction;
-   Throughout the academic year to any one of the following persons
    -   Student Experience Leader
    -   Academic Operations Lead
    -   Module Leader
    -   Programme Leader
    -   Examinations Officer
    -   Quality Assurance Lead

1.2   Learner Support Application/ Admissions Process

1.2.1 Application/Admissions Process

Once the Admissions Team receives an application advising of the requirement of a learner support the following process will be followed;

The Admissions Lead will organise a meeting with the applicant and will ensure the following:

- specific educational supports will be discussed such as the requirement of readers in braille or a loop system in a classroom or indeed access requirements are discussed;
- Information is provided regarding facilities and supports available in the College during the Academic year and regarding examinations;
- An individual orientation of the College building(s) and in particular of the rooms the learner will be attending for example labs or traditional flat classrooms which may well involve a consultation with the Academic Operations Lead and/or Operations Lead as to suitability of rooms and evacuation processes etc;
- An appraisal by the Academic Lead of the programme, assessments and exams, which may require consultation with the examinations officer and/or Quality Assurance Lead, and to advise the applicant of accommodations which are available thereto;
- The Admissions Lead will then inform the Quality Assurance Lead and Academic Operations Lead of any specific learning supports needed to ensure a consistent and supportive approach from the college. The appropriate lead will advise the relevant Programme Leader (once the consent of the applicant is obtained) with the consent of the applicant. The applicant will then fill in a Learner Support Form which is available on the College website and the Learner Handbook.

1.2.2 Learner Supports

While the supports below are available to all learners – those with specific learning needs will be allocated designate support, Student Experience Leader, to ensure they are not hindered in their studies. Dorset College offers specific supports such as a Loop System but for support relating to Dyslexia there are also the following supports:

- Dorset College have a designated person, Head of Library Information Systems and Enhancement, who provides extra classes both general (Referencing etc.) and specific (Spelling and Grammar etc.) throughout the year. Details of this are available on our VLE Moodle and our Website as part of the Student Hub.
- Learners will have access to the Library and Computer Laboratories each week and there is WI-Fi throughout each building;
- Learners have access to the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) Moodle for details of course content, timetables, examinations, course notes, contact details of further supports, advice, tips on taking exams, stress, presentations etc
- Learners have access to additional information through the Learner Handbook.
- Programme Leader(s), Academic Operations Lead, Quality Assurance Lead, teaching staff and administrative staff as well as the Student Experience Leader are available to talk to learners by appointment to deal with any issues relating to academic support

- Reception: Learners have access to a reception desk Monday – Thursday up to 9.30pm and Friday up to 5.00 pm where they can arrange language exchanges/classes where appropriate.

1.2.3 Academic Term Induction & Re-Induction

Induction is a vital part of the Academic Term and is led by our Student Experience Leader who brings the learners through the lay-out of the academic year, provides the learners with an induction pack and introduces each learner to the academic and management team.

At the beginning of each year including those who have progressed to another level (for example from Stage one to two) Dorset College Student Experience Leader ensures Induction and Re-induction takes place every September or in January if a January intake or when a programme starts if a Further Education Programme.

The induction pack contains the following;

- Learner Handbook which contains information on Learner Supports and related application forms such as examination supports;
- Academic Team Profiles and Contact Details;
- Wi-Fi Codes for the respective Buildings;
- Facilites information such as Opening Hours for the Library and Canteen;
- Moodle and Office 365 Instructions;
- Programme Handbook specific to the relevant Programme which includes credits, module descriptors, Assessment Schedule and all programme relevant material.

1.2.4 Guidance and Pastoral Counselling

The pastoral care of learners is of utmost concern to all Dorset College staff. The College applies the Code of Practice and Guidelines for the Provision of Education to International Learners (published by the Irish Higher Education Quality Network, IHEQN). All programmes offered to international learners by Dorset College have been placed on the Interim List of Eligible Programmes (ILEP).

The Student Counsellor is available at designated times to offer confidential, impartial and supportive counselling to learners experiencing personal difficulties. For those presenting every effort shall be made to identify the appropriate professional help available.

1.2.5 Assignments

- Extension of deadlines must be negotiated and agreed in consultation with the appropriate member of faculty/tutor and agreed with the relevant Programme Leader. The Academic Operations Lead and Exams Officer ensure that any such extensions are recorded to ensure that an appropriate schedule of assignment submissions is maintained when making these arrangements.

1.2.6 Examination Provision

- Examinations are central to the academic process and learners are encouraged to advise any of the following persons if they require additional supports:
  - Academic Operations Lead
  - Quality Assurance Lead
  - Student Experience Leader and specifically the
  - Examinations Officer who takes charge of the process and ensures that the appropriate supports are in place to ensure the learners demonstrate their knowledge of the subject being examined.

1.2.6.1 Exam Supports

- Extra time/Rest-Periods:
  - to complete each exam paper: the amount of time a candidate will be allowed will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and the Quality Assurance Lead and the Examinations Officer will ensure the assessment/examination is achievable in the time-frame;
- Dictation to an amanuensis:
  - (someone to whom you can dictate the learner's exam answers). An amanuensis should have a good working knowledge of the subject matter being examined and be in no way connected personally or professionally to the learner;
- A reader:
  - will read and re-read the entire or any part of the examination paper as well as any part of the candidate's text as requested.
- Enlarged print to A3 size/Paper:
  - this is common for candidates who are partially sighted. Examination papers and other relevant documents are enlarged to a readable size or put onto yellow paper for example;
- Assistive Technology and/or a separate exam room:
  - candidates may request the use of a computer etc. in conjunction with any of the other supports and such a request must be medically supported.
- Defer or an Extension of deadlines:
  - must be negotiated and agreed in consultation with the Module Leader and the Quality Assurance Lead/Examinations Officer on a case-by-case basis and in line with the supports required and reasonably available to Dorset College;
- Other:
  - some candidates may have specific requirements that are not known to the College. In this instance it is the responsibility of the learner to inform the Student Experience Leader and Examination Officer of these requirements well in advance of the exam.

1.3 Flexible Learning Pathways

As stated in policy 5.2 in this section, the College adopts a primarily face-to-face teaching approach, which is supported by technology through its VLE. However, the College is cognisant that this teaching approach is not appropriate or best suited to all learners.

Furthermore, the College also recognises the limits to the education provision that it can offer to the necessary quality standard.

Therefore, the College commits to:

- providing flexible learning pathways where it can. Ordinarily this would include allowing learners to defer part of a programme (subject to the mitigating circumstances being documented and accepted by the College), and providing learners with alternative assessment instruments where needed
- allowing learners to undertake a programme using an alternative teaching approach where that teaching approach has been validated by the College for the delivery of that programme
- providing learning material and/or resources that may be required to assist the learning experience
- utilise technology to assist the learning experience, such as interactive whiteboards, library services and laptops in the classroom
- having dedicated personnel in place to co-ordinate learning supports, such as supplementary academic writing classes, mathematics classes and assessment workshops.
- facilitating learners to meet with their lecturers outside of the scheduled classroom times (appointment only) which forms part of their contract of employment.

1.3.1 Blended Learning Support

Physical Resources
A range of physical resources is required to facilitate synchronous and asynchronous delivery of learning content and assessment.
These physical resources include the:
- Provision of technology tools to deliver online classes.
- Teaching and Learning resource folder in the Staff Hub on Moodle linked to national and international best practices to direct associated staff CPD and training.

Learning Resources
The Teaching and Learning resource folder in the Staff Hub on the VLE will contain a broad range of resources to support and facilitate blended and online programmes. These may include:
- a set of training resources including user guides and information guides on using VLE.
- best practice guides on learning design approach for the development of learning objects and the delivery of blended and online content
- best practice guides on delivering online classes and moderating online activities.
- best practice guides on assessment and the provision of assessment feedback for blended and online modules