



GALWAY BUSINESS SCHOOL

Teaching and Learning Policy

QA May 2020

1.2 Rationale

The Teaching and Learning Strategy at GBS is informed by the QQI Award Standards, European Standards and Guidelines, the National Framework of Qualifications, and the 'National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030' (Hunt Report), along with stakeholder engagement with lecturers, students and employers on both how students learn and what lifelong skills they need to acquire for the world of work. The main purpose of the strategy is:

- Preparation for sustainable employment
- Preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies
- Personal Development
- The development and maintenance, of a broad advanced knowledge base achieved through teaching, learning and research

1.3 Teaching & Learning Strategy

The Teaching and Learning Strategy at Galway Business School takes account of continuing developments in Irish and international development in Higher Education. Our mission is to transform our students for individual excellence and global citizenship. 'Transformation requires curiosity, courage and commitment – qualities that we seek to develop in our students. Armed with these qualities, our students will not only understand the world of business, they will also be capable of making it better'.

Galway Business School recognises that the development of an academic ethos to foster student-centred learning is at the core of its mission. The School's teaching and learning strategy has two primary dimensions, namely (i) students and (ii) lecturers, underpinned by rigorous evaluation and reporting systems.

Galway Business School's Strategic Plan (2015 - 2020) closely mirrors the mission for higher education in Ireland, as documented in the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (Hunt Report). Like the Hunt Report, our strategy looks at how we can pursue ambitious yet realistic objectives in terms of three interconnected core strands - teaching and learning, research, and engagement. We consider these strands as underpinning the strategy of Galway Business School.

Figure 2: GBS Strategic Plan



In addition to this, and corroborated by assertions in the Hunt Report, internationalisation is another core theme at GBS. These core themes are supported by a solid quality assurance function, which is fundamental to all GBS' core and supporting functions. Specifically in relation to Teaching & Learning, it explores how GBS ensures that its students can have an excellent teaching and learning experience facilitated by a high-quality learning environment, with state-of-the-art learning resources.

The commitment to flexible learning modes provides the opportunity for wider participation and fairness of access for learners. Galway Business School is well placed to provide this capacity as the private sector can and will adapt more quickly to market demands.

6.3.1 Teaching and Learning Strategy Goals and Objectives

Our Teaching and Learning Strategy is based on a set of key goals with specific objectives for learning, teaching and assessment. These take account of external reference points of knowledge, skills and competencies as stated in QQI Awards Standards. These include but are not limited to:

- Learning as a skill
- Student success and progression

- Competence-based learning
- Flexible approaches to learning
- Internationally relevant inclusive curriculum
- Research informed curriculum
- Assessment to support learning
- Readiness for Employability
- Academic and pastoral learner support
- Staff development in teaching and learning
- Research

Teaching and assessment methods at GBS enable students from a range of backgrounds to discover, exploit and build on their strengths. GBS's teaching approaches are learner centred and reflect different learning styles and different disciplinary areas. These teaching approaches are both inclusive of and complemented by e-learning opportunities (through a list of e-activities), self- directed learning, problem-based learning, and collaborative projects. This facilitates the teachers 'need to stimulate active, not passive, learning and to encourage students to be critical, creative thinkers, with the capacity to go on learning after their college days are over' as recommended by Hunt (p. 54).

The main format of teaching in Galway Business School is classroom based teaching supported by the VLE (Moodle) as outlined in the contact hours on approved programme schedules. The focus of the teaching methods employed support learning and the learner, through helping the learner understand how to use resources. There are dedicated modules around learning skills and these are included at every stage and module, thus enabling students to achieve the learning outcomes of their programmes and modules.

6.3.2 Digital Capacity

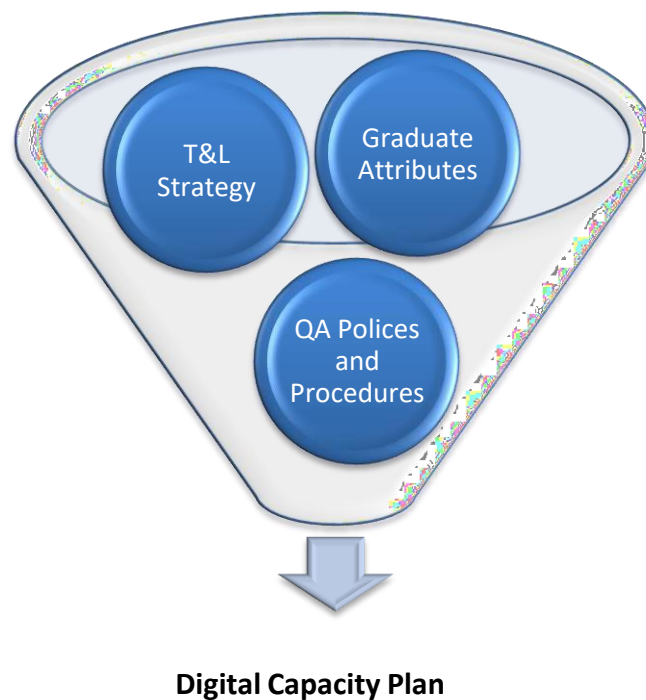
Given the increasing transformation of 'digital' capacity Galway Business School aims to meet the expectations of digitally empowered students to help them better engage and enhance their learning experience. Educating students on digital capacity highlights:

- Flexibility and Accessibility
- How to keep pace with a global world

- Awareness of their digital footprint
- New ways of working
- How to reach out to other students

Galway Business School enhances the student experience by embedding digital technologies, resources and skills in all elements of their planning techniques, together with using a collaborative approach to student and lecturer learning, as can be seen from Figure 6.3.2 The three attributes of Galway Business School's Digital Capacity Plan: Teaching and Learning Strategy, Graduate Attributes and QA Policies and Procedures are highlighted in Figure 6.3.2 below.

Figure 6.3.2: GBS Digital Capacity Plan



6.3.3 The Core Teaching, Learning and Assessment areas

6.3.3.1 Programme Content

GBS ensures that the content of its programmes is both engaging and challenging and allows for fostering skills for future employability. The MIPLOs of each programme inform MIMLOs of each module both in terms of theoretical information as well as practical application. Each programme's content is therefore designed to:

- Ensure that MIMLOs are benchmarked against those of other leading educational institutions
- Ensure that modules are theoretically informed and practically applied
- Facilitate learner input into the devising of a programmes content

6.3.3.2 Excellence in Teaching and Learning

GBS recognises that its teaching staff should be informed on best and contemporary practice in teaching delivery. The Head of Teaching and Learning therefore, monitors the recent developments in effective teaching strategies and disseminates his / her knowledge among the rest of the academic staff during Academic Think Tank sessions. These sessions also allow for the academic team to share ideas and practices around effective teaching strategies. In addition, GBS has committed to providing financial support for some of its members to attend various conferences. In summary, the teaching and learning excellence is therefore fostered through:

- Ensuring that faculty members are informed of teaching and learning theories, and effective teaching strategies
- Facilitating teaching staff in furthering their knowledge by providing continuous professional development opportunities
- Monitoring the teaching and learning approach on an annual basis

6.3.3.3 Learner Engagement

Learner participation is important for ensuring continuous learning and positive educational experiences for learners. GBS academic staff ensures that the learning environment is interactive

and that learners are engaged in a variety of learning activities/modes as much as possible. The main aims of learner participation are:

- To provide an engaging and challenging programme in terms of content, delivered through the use of engaging teaching and learning strategies
- To explore how technology can be used both inside and outside the classroom to enhance positive learner experience
- To ensure there is an emphasis on transferable skills
- To foster a learner voice and feedback that serves as a basis for further development of various aspects of the programme assessment strategies.

6.3.3.4 Assignments Design

GBS ensures that the assessment strategy is both appropriate at the module level and cohesive at the programme level. In addition, the learner workload has to be manageable and appropriate for allowing the learner an opportunity to achieve high results. The main considerations are given to the following when designing assessments:

- Assessment workload is appropriate, challenging and balanced at each stage of a programme
- There is an appropriate exam/continuous assessment ratio within the overall context of a programme
- A variety of assessments are utilised at each stage of a programme

1.4 Approaches and Methods

The Teaching methods and approaches that GBS employ in partnership with the lecturers help students take ownership of, and responsibility for their own learning. To enhance learner experience GBS lecturers focus on consistently adopting a learner centred approach both through delivery style and methods utilised. Enhanced by the use of Interactive Display Units lecturers achieve this approach through the variety of methods including:

- Classroom-based delivery
- Formative assessment
- Problem-solving
- Skills development

- Seminars & Workshops
- Skills Development including personal skills development
- Case Study Analysis
- Research supervision and Projects
- Group work
- Presentation skills
- Simulation games
- E-learning including E-activities
- Company visits
- Guest lecturers

6.4.1 Creating Blended Learning through Technology

E-activities, supported by Moodle, facilitate the following additional teaching methods:

- Forums, Blogs
- Videos
- Podcast
- Discussion Boards
- Wikis
- Online Journals
- Online Tests/ Surveys/ Questionnaires
- Web-based Knowledge Construction in Business
- Virtual Reality Business Games

This student-centred approach is one where lecturers and students are on a learning journey with the lecturer acting as guide and facilitator. As a student progresses through the various stages, the subject matter becomes more challenging. Students move from the acquisition of knowledge to critical analysis and the application of concepts to practical situations.

1.5 Personal and Skills Development for Employability

All documents relating to Higher Education learning outcomes highlight the critical importance of key transferable skills that all learners need to acquire as part of their undergraduate education. They also point to the fact that 'the simple acquisition of knowledge is not enough to count as education'. These transferable skills include analytic reasoning, critical thinking, work readiness, research, and the practical application of theory. In addition they suggest that all learners need to demonstrate competence in written and oral communication skills, leadership ability, and the ability to work in a team environment.

Galway Business School is committed to enabling learners to develop these key skills that can be transferred to other areas of their lives, of both, their professional and personal. These skills are illustrated in Figure 6.5.

Fig. 6.5: Learner's Skills fostered by GBS' Programmes



These skills are evidenced right throughout all GBS's programmes, both in specific credit modules (Learn to Learn) as well as being integrated and tested throughout other modules. The programme development strategy at GBS also encompasses these elements throughout both module content and assessment strategies. One such example includes cross modular assessment which interlinks modules learning outcomes & student skill sets.

1.6 Quality Assurance in Teaching and Learning

The Academic Co-ordinator and the Registrar reports to the Quality Assurance Committee to ensure that the views of students, staff and graduates are fully integrated into the review of resources. The Quality Assurance Committee makes recommendations where appropriate to the Academic Council. Particular emphasis is given to any factors that would materially affect programme delivery and any deviations from the school's goals and objectives.

Although the Quality Assurance Committee will typically make recommendations for remedial action and resource improvements, the Academic Council decides whether to make requests for additional, remedial or new resources. If the Academic Council recommends expenditure or commits to any decision with resource implications, an implementation plan is agreed with the Managing Director along with a proposed schedule for completion. The implementation is monitored by the Quality Assurance Committee.

If recommendations are not approved by the Academic Council, the reasons for refusal are outlined to the Quality Assurance Committee. Together with the Managing Director, the Quality Assurance Committee may decide to re-submit the recommendations with additional information to give extra clarity to the proposals. Where disagreements arise among any of the Boards regarding the school's facilities and resources, a specific report is submitted by the Academic Council to the Governing Body summarising recommendations and disagreements to ensure that recommendations on any changes to the school's facilities and resources and/or implementation plans are in line with overall strategic planning, quality control, development and improving institutional quality.

6.6.1 Monitoring the Learning Experience

The maintenance of the quality of the learning experience is central to the ethos of the school. To ensure this, the school recognises the need to continuously monitor and improve the experience that it offers. The following information is used for the monitoring of learning experience:

- Module feedback from learners each semester
- Feedback collected from class representatives during SSLS
- Faculty feedback collected by the Head of Teaching & Learning during Academic Think Tanks
- Feedback from external examiners
- Report on contemporary trends in teaching & learning from the Head of Teaching & Learning

1.7 Learner Complaint Procedure

6.7.1 Purpose

GBS is committed to excellence in teaching and service provision, therefore it aims for the highest standards of quality in all its activities. It takes legitimate learner complaints seriously and aims to resolve them in a clear, fair and timely manner. The guiding principles are:

- To provide learners with a clear framework in which to raise complaints
- To respect all the individuals involved in a complaint
- To support improvements through regular reporting and reviewing of issues raised

For the purpose of this procedure, a complaint is considered to be an expression of significant or sustained dissatisfaction, where a student seeks a specific action to address the issue. The complaints procedure spans many aspects of the student experience: for example, teaching and academic facilities, academic services, student accommodation administered by the school, student support services, administrative services and alleged actions or inaction by a member of GBS staff. The complaint process procedures together with the appeal procedures are illustrated in Figures 6.7 and 6.8.

6.7.2 Informal Complaint Procedures

Learners may initially make an informal complaint. Complaints about the following are deemed as informal and can usually be dealt with at Reception:

- Library opening hours
- Students wishing to borrow books outside of library opening hours
- Printing Card issues
- Photocopier jamming, breaking etc.

6.7.3 Formal Complaint Procedures

The formal Complaints Procedures apply to complaints from any registered learner of the school however anonymous complaints will not be considered. Learners who wish to make a formal complaint must complete the Student Complaints Form (below) and submit it to the Academic Coordinator Reception for the attention of the Registrar. A student may raise a formal complaint relating, but not limited, to the following perceived issues:

- The quality or standard of any service or failure to provide a service by the school or a member of its staff
- The quality of facilities or learning resources
- The failure to follow an appropriate administrative process
- The perceived unfair treatment of a learner or inappropriate behaviour by a staff member towards a student, which would not be covered by the Dignity and Respect Policy
- An alleged action or inaction by the school or a member of its staff.

Generally, complaints are resolved more easily and effectively at an early stage and by those who have a direct influence on the situation. In the first instance, learners should seek the advice of Academic Coordinator and use existing informal mechanisms to resolve difficulties – for example, discussing with individual lecturers or support staff, or engaging with student representatives. The formal student complaints procedure is available when informal approaches have not produced a satisfactory resolution within a reasonable timeframe, or when the seriousness of the complaint merits it.

6.7.3.1 The Formal Complaint Process

Learners should understand that when they make a complaint certain procedures will follow and complainants must be clear on the grounds for their complaint. They are required to provide full and accurate information and to cooperate with the investigation, including providing any additional information as requested. A learner making a complaint will not be discriminated against or suffer any recrimination as a result of making a legitimate complaint. Where a complaint is deemed to be malicious or vexatious or where false information is submitted, disciplinary action may be taken against the complainant.

GBS seeks to handle all complaints with discretion. It is important that all parties involved take care to ensure that confidentiality is respected. As far as is practicable, confidentiality will be preserved at all stages in the procedure, in the interests of both the student making the complaint and the individual members of staff involved. Where a complaint involves an individual member of staff that member of staff has a right to respond as part of the investigation. All information received and considered as part of the investigation of a complaint will be retained for record purposes.

6.7.3.2 Stage 1

1. The student complaints form is available from Moodle (p. 127).
2. Formal complaints should normally be made within one month of the last related incident occurring.
3. The complaint will first be assessed by the Academic Coordinator to confirm that local or informal processes have been exhausted before the formal complaint process is initiated.
4. The learner will receive acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint and will be informed of the next steps and, where appropriate, the timescale.
5. If the complaint is to be investigated, Academic Co-ordinator will investigate the complaint or designate an investigator to carry out an investigation into the issues raised. The investigator will normally be an experienced member of staff from the area who is not implicated in any way in the complaint and does not have any close relationship with any of the parties involved. Should the complaint refer to an individual, that person should be informed at this stage of the complaint. The appointed investigator will examine the issues raised in the complaint and will seek to establish:
 - the nature and circumstances of the complaint
 - whether the complaint has merit
 - what actions (if any) are needed to resolve the issue
6. As part of the investigation, the investigator may conduct individual interviews with the complainant, with those against whom the complaint is made and with any relevant third party.
7. On completion of the investigation, the investigator will provide a written report to the parties concerned recommending measures to be taken to resolve the complaint to the parties concerned. Once approved by the Managing Director a copy of the report will be sent to the complainant. This will set out the outcome of the investigation and ask the learner to respond to the outcome of the investigation within 15 working days.

Possible outcomes

- A mutually acceptable outcome is reached.
- A mutually acceptable outcome is not reached but the Registrar considers that the complaint has been heard fairly and that the appropriate actions have been taken
- The learner appeals the outcome

6.7.3.3 Stage 2: Learner Appeals Procedures to an unresolved complaint

A learner may appeal in writing the outcome of Stage 1 of their complaint process if they have reason to believe that

- the written report does not address the substantive areas of the complaint
- there is a procedural irregularity in connection with the conduct of the investigation

The Registrar will chair a small group comprised of individuals with relevant expertise (such as the Senior Lecturer, Managing Director and Equality Officer) to consider the appeal.

The role of the group is to judge whether the school has correctly and properly addressed the substantive areas of the complaint, followed correct procedures and examined all the evidence. The learner will be provided with the report of the group within three weeks of requesting an appeal and will be asked to respond within 15 working days.

Possible outcomes

- The complaint is deemed to have been handled appropriately. No further action is necessary.
- The complaint is referred back to the Academic Coordinator for further action and/or investigation which results in a mutually acceptable outcome and the problem is resolved.



GALWAY BUSINESS SCHOOL

STUDENT COMPLAINTS FORM

This form is used when a student feels they have grounds for complaint in any areas. Please submit the completed form to Academic Coordinator at Padraig@gci.ie

| | | | |
|---|--|-------------------|--|
| Full Name | | | |
| Address for Correspondence | | E-Mail Address: | |
| | | | |
| | | Telephone Number: | |
| | | | |
| Programme Studied: | | | |
| Dates you were enrolled on the programme: | | | |

YOUR COMPLAINT

Please set out the main points of your complaint. Please include:

- Nature of the complaint
- Please describe in detail the nature of the event

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| | | | |
| [Please continue on a separate sheet(s), if necessary] | | | |

| | | | |
|---------|-------|-------|-------|
| Signed: | | Date: | |
|---------|-------|-------|-------|

Fig. 6.7: Learner Complaints Procedures

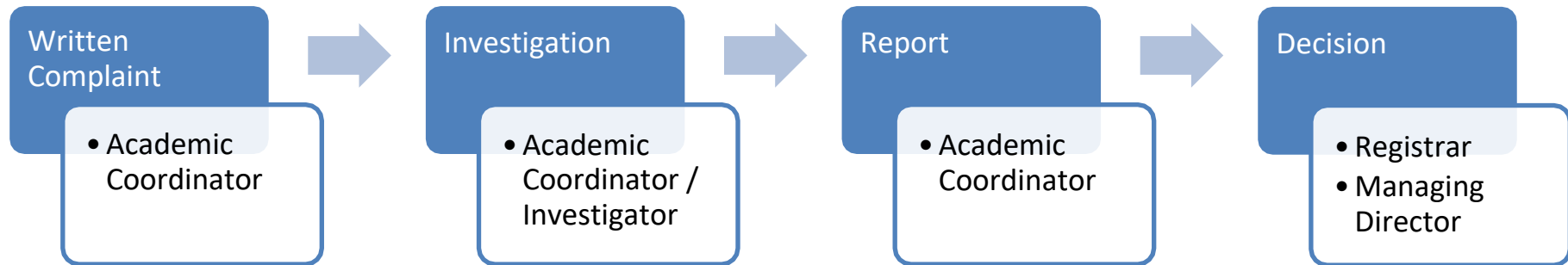
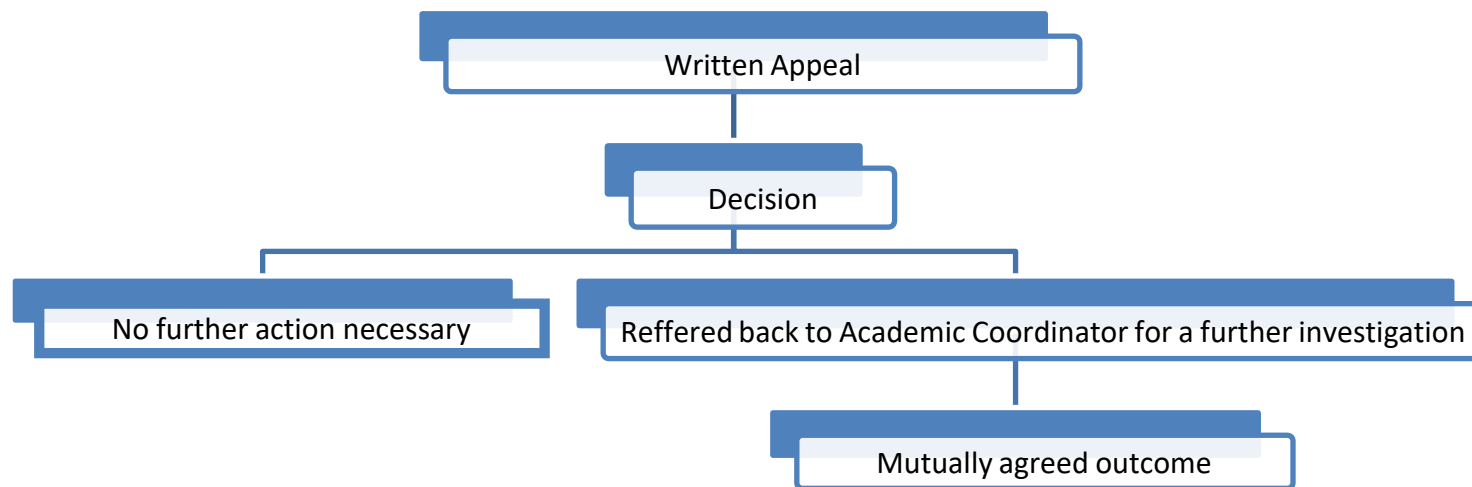


Fig. 6.8: Learner Appeals Procedures



1.8 Learning Environment

Galway Business School acknowledges that physical resources contribute positively to the students' learning, performance and satisfaction. Galway Business School aims to provide and maintain a safe, well-resourced building, available and accessible to all staff and students of the school including:

- attractive clean classroom spaces
- interactive Display Screens which give access to all resources on line
- academic server allowing lecturers to develop resources that can be backed up and shared
- fast WIFI
- well-stocked library
- virtual Learning Environment (Moodle)
- IT supports for students and staff that promote learning including access to laptops, printing and photocopying
- study space for students in the evenings and at weekends

6.8.1 Academic Environment

Academic standards are established by the Academic Council. Annual reports from Programme Boards, as well as regular communication with Programme Leaders, are the principal bases for decisions taken at Academic Council. Secondly, as indicated in Staff Recruitment, Management & Development Policy, there are a number of staff development initiatives undertaken each year.

6.8.2 Physical Infrastructural Resources

The Managing Director and Registrar ensure that all classrooms are of a size capable of taking the number of students required, well ventilated and / or heated and have suitable furniture to allow optimum teaching and learning. Each classroom is equipped with sufficient sockets, IT provision, whiteboards, flip charts, projectors and PCs as required. The room must have access for those with disabilities and must also allow students and teachers to access bathroom and recreational facilities.

There are dedicated student facilities including a student common room and a café and the availability of these facilities additionally serves the function of providing students with an informal, social space to meet.

6.8.3 Library Resources

The provision of library facilities is a fundamental resource for both students and staff and an essential part of the teaching and learning environment. Galway Business School has invested in both a dedicated physical library and a virtual library (EBSCO). Full and Part-time students have ample access to borrowing resources with a renewals and ordering facility. These facilities are seen as being a resource for both Learners and staff and are an essential part of the teaching and learning environment. It is a priority for Galway Business School to increase Learners' familiarity and engagement with the online database. All Learners receive intensive library induction at the commencement of their course in addition to on-going training sessions at modular level.

The library has an on-going stock replenishment system in place, with emphasis placed on current titles. Lecturers on all modules are encouraged to recommend core text books as well as indicative supplementary reading to Learners. These resources are provided for in the library. Booklists are updated at the start of each academic year. Lecturers are kept abreast of current titles and updated texts through regular engagement with publishers and are involved in editorial reviews of new titles.

Galway Business School library facilities have been and will be expanded commensurate with the ambitions of the School. Our recent upgrade of our EBSCO online library database licence has significantly developed and expanded our online facilities, allowing students to access the industry's most popular business research database, Business Source Premier.

GBS's physical library content will be enlarged proportionate to the learner numbers in the school. Up-stocking the library continues to be done before the start of each academic year, following consultation with both academic staff and publishing companies, and based on experience of what material and what quantity is needed. Galway Business School keeps a modest stock of books and journals in hard copy in the library.

There is regular monitoring of the library facilities and its distinction will lie in its relevance and agility to adapt quickly and in response to demand.

There are copying and printing facilities in the library and dedicated computer desks. There are 48 study spaces/seats and desks in the library. Additional rooms are available for group study and these can be booked through the Academic Coordinator.

6.8.4 Information Technology Resources

Galway Business School has installed the open source Virtual learning Environment (VLE), Moodle, as the platform to support student learning and self-study. All lecturers use Moodle in the delivery of their programmes. Moodle enables interactive learning through access to programme notes, past exam papers, journal articles, videos and other key readings, sample assessments and various online exams and assignments. Students use Moodle for class preparation and revision. Staff training and student induction sessions regarding optimal use of this resource, including the setting up of interactive forums and Wikis, are scheduled at the start of the academic year.

All learners are enrolled on the Virtual Learning Environment – Moodle. As well as providing information, Moodle also acts as an assessment tool through quizzes, Multiple Choice Questions, Case Study Analyses, Applied Virtual Business Games / Simulations, Discussion Forums, and Quantitative Solutions. Lecture notes and presentations are uploaded weekly by the respective lecturer to enable Learners to have material for class preparation and revision. This resource gives support to the learner off-site and within the school and is particularly important for part-time learners.

The recently upgraded version of Moodle brings a more robust online platform for students with such improvements as new interactive features, and advancements in learning activities and resources for students. The new Moodle provides a clear view of all learning activities and resources for each program, including assessment information. In addition, the new Moodle platform includes subscription tools to receive information about your study, such as RSS feeds of forum discussions, calendar feeds and forum discussions or marked assignments. Our VLE link is <http://elearning.galwaybusinessschool.ie/>

There have been significant training and Learner induction sessions regarding optimal use of this resource including the setting up of interactive forums. There have been investments in IT hardware and software for Learner use with the increased use of virtual resources during class and as on-going study resource for Learners. Galway Business School has identified a Moodle champion within the

staff (Academic Coordinator). This person assists both learners and staff in their use of this VLE resource contributing to increased learning.

6.8.5 Facilitating of Work Experience for learners

The school is currently submitting programmes for QQI validation that offer work placement as an optional component. Therefore, going forward there is a need to ensure the appropriateness of the environment where existing learners may gain ECTS credit for learning acquired in the workplace. The following are the main components for facilitating the effective work experience for learners:

- Ensuring that each organisation that is facilitating work experience for GBS learners is fully informed on what is entailed. This is communicated by email to the appropriate person in the organisation with the details of the requirements of the work experience
- Having a designated liaison person internally for the learner to contact with work placement queries.
- Requesting that the work placement provider informs the school and learner of a nominated contact in their organisation for work placement queries.
- The Work Experience Project Handbook will be designed containing relevant information for learners who wish to undertake the work experience as a part of their course.

6.8.6 Evaluating Learning Environment

The school understands the importance of regularly reviewing the effectiveness of all academic and support services related to its programmes of higher education and training. The first priority in providing these services is to focus on the student experience within the school. The main support services are reviewed annually with regard to adequacy, functionality and capacity.

Galway Business School recognises that the continuous management, evaluation and improvement of physical resources and other support services supports the quality of learning and teaching that it espouses.

The Quality Assurance committee and the Managing Director are involved in this process as a key part of their respective roles and responsibilities. In particular, the Managing Director has duties and responsibilities regarding Teaching and Learning resources. These include:

- ensuring that the physical and resource requirements are in line with the strategic plans of the Directors and that all legal and statutory requirements are met
- managing the institutional administrative support for both institutions including allocation of resources, classroom scheduling and maintaining and upgrading of all facilities and resources as necessary
- Gathering feedback from lecturers, students, administration and from the various committees on resources. This information informs the Annual Resources Report which the MD produces for the Quality Assurance Committee based on the previous year's findings.