



Summary of the EQUIS review of the Kemmy Business School (KBS) October 2021

EQUIS Review dates	5th to 8th October 2021
Summary report prepared by KBS	April 2022
KBS Website	www.ul.ie/business
UL QSU Website	www.ul.ie/quality

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1 The UL Quality Review Process

The University of Limerick (UL) follows an established process for quality assurance (QA) and quality improvement (QI) in line with that originally developed jointly by the Irish Universities Association (IUA) and the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB), the latter whose functions are now carried out by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). The review process involves an approximate seven-year cycle during which each unit works to improve the quality of its programmes and services and undergoes a rigorous self-evaluation prior to a quality review by internationally recognised experts in the relevant field.

The common framework adopted by the Irish universities for their QA/QI systems is consistent with both legislative requirements and international good practice. The process itself evolved as a result of the Universities Act, 1997, in which the responsibility for QA/QI was placed directly on the individual universities. The process now complies with the [Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act 2012](#), as amended by the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019*. The UL Quality Support Unit (QSU) website (www.ul.ie/quality) provides details on the process.

All units are reviewed against quality assurance standards as described in the tailored quality review guidelines, which is available on the [QSU website](#). The planned schedule of quality reviews is available on the [QSU website](#).

The UL quality review process comprises the following three phases:

1. Pre-review phase, in which the unit under review conducts a self-evaluation exercise and writes a self-assessment report (SAR).
2. Review phase, in which a quality review group comprising external experts, both national and international, review the SAR, visit the unit, meet with stakeholders and produce a report (this report), which is made publicly available on the [QSU website](#).
3. Post-review phase, in which the unit considers and formally responds to the recommendations of the QRG, devises plans to implement them and reports implementation progress to the University Quality Committee and UL senior management.

An EQUIS quality review of the Kemmy Business School (KBS), encompassing all aspects of KBS operations, was scheduled in the same period as the school's institutional Quality Review. The terms of reference for the KBS Quality Review and the EQUIS review were examined in detail and found to overlap quite significantly. In accordance with the University Policy for Management and Reporting on Professional, Statutory & Regulatory (PSRB) accreditation, Academic Council approved that the detailed EQUIS international peer review (process and output) would also serve as the University Quality Review.

A detailed EQUIS SAR was prepared by the school and the EQUIS visit took place in October 2021. The EQUIS Peer Review report was published in December 2021 and presented to the UL Quality Committee meeting of March 9th, 2022.

In the post-review phase, the QSU and the KBS are developing the quality improvement plan (QIP) based on the recommendations made by the visiting EQUIS panel.

2 Overview of the KBS

The Kemmy Business School is a full-service business school within the University of Limerick. The school is named after the late Jim Kemmy; former parliamentarian, scholar and Mayor of the City of Limerick. The school is one of four faculties at UL and it has been integral to the recognition of the unique contribution that UL has made to Irish society and latterly to international education and research over the last 49 years.

Today, KBS school positions itself as a research-active, international, socially engaged school that delivers an outstanding educational experience with a growing international reputation for specialist areas of expertise.

This background is reflected in the KBS mission which is central to all KBS activities and informs decision-making, strategic priorities and resource allocation:

KBS Mission:

As a leading Irish business school in a public university system, KBS is committed to excellence in teaching, and to fostering a knowledge and understanding of business and society within a diverse, research active and socially engaged environment.

KBS is academic home to over 3,200 students and over 100 full-time staff and 37 adjunct faculty in four constituent departments: Accounting & Finance, Economics, Management & Marketing and Work & Employment Studies.

Through the school's suite of programmes, KBS offers education pathways that span the full range of the Bologna cycles.

Over 90% of KBS undergraduate students are engaged on full-time, four-year degree programmes with integrated work placement and international exchange or dual-degree options. The postgraduate portfolio comprises a combination of pre-experience, specialist and full-time master's degrees, post-experience professional programmes and doctoral degrees.

Figure 1 outlines some of the seminal developments for the KBS since the establishment of the institution in 1972.

Key KBS Dates

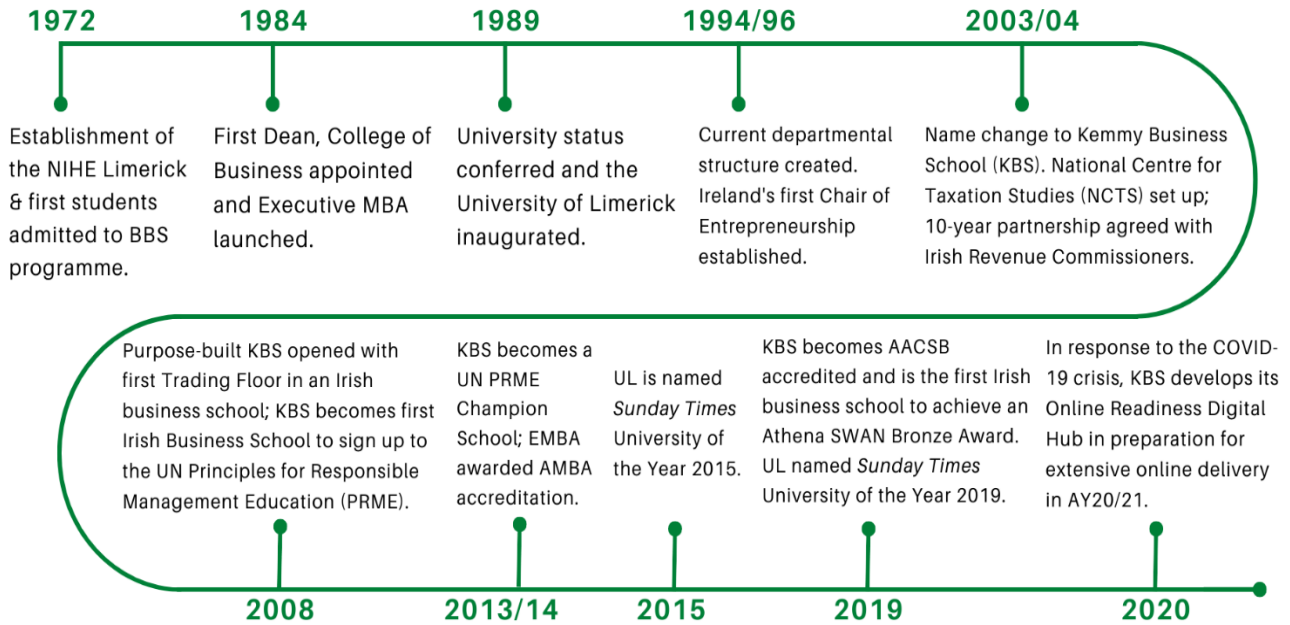


Figure 1 Key Dates in the History of the KBS

KBS Going Forward

In the first quarter of 2022, the KBS embarks on a new strategic planning process that considers ways in which it can respond to an evolving global environment. These will be enunciated in the KBS Strategic Plan 2023 – 2028.

In a post-pandemic world, the strategic direction of the school will prioritise agility and the ability to respond more rapidly to market needs and newer challenges that include geopolitical tensions, climate change and the ongoing impact of COVID-19.

3 Findings of the EQUIS Peer Review Team (PRT)

3.1 Panel and Scope of the EQUIS review

The four member review panel was composed of 2 international Deans, an international industry representative and a senior EQUIS director. The EQUIS review covered all areas of KBS activities across the full portfolio of programmes at undergraduate, postgraduate and PhD level.

3.2 Preparation for EQUIS

KBS gained eligibility from the EFMD to enter their EQUIS accreditation process in 2018. During the eligibility process, three areas for further development were identified and these were central in the schools' preparations. The 2021 visiting panel noted and commended actions taken by the school in these three areas - international diversity of staff and students, development of core faculty and the school's programme portfolio - and found that the KBS had appropriately "*utilised the EQUIS process as an instrument to enhance quality development*".

3.3 Area of Excellence - extract from EQUIS PRT report

The EQUIS PRT spotlighted the following in section 2.3 of their report:

"The School excels in its strong value-based ethos, encapsulated in the Jim Kemmy legacy, which is deeply embedded in the consciousness of faculty, staff and students. This ethos, which is shared by the School's parent institution, underlines social responsibility, close connections with the local, regional and national community as well as an external openness towards the world, and is effectively integrated into all operations of the KBS. The PRT commends this aspect of KBS which constitutes a feature of outstanding quality. A special commendation should be given to the KBS efforts to open up the access to higher education to students from socially disadvantaged groups such as the use of diploma programmes as an inroad for students to degree programmes."

Extract, in full, of **Section 2.3 Area of Excellence** of the KBS EQUIS Peer Review Report is reproduced here with the permission of the EFMD

4 EQUIS PRT Recommendations to the EQUIS Accreditation Board

4.1 Recommendations - extract from EQUIS PRT report

“In view of the knowledge about the School that the PRT has been able to gather, it recommends that Kemmy Business School, University of Limerick in its present situation and under the current EQUIS criteria, be granted EQUIS Accreditation for three years.

The PRT has identified a number of areas where actions are of special importance for the School’s road forward:

- Finalisation of the development of a new strategy and modalities for its implementation, including new qualitative KPIs and the identification of relevant international benchmarks.
- Improving faculty sufficiency through continued successive expansion of core faculty.
- Continued internationalisation of core faculty in combination with considering establishing an international visiting professor’s programme.”

Extract in full of **Section 3 Recommendation to the EQUIS Accreditation Board** of the KBS EQUIS Peer Review Report is reproduced here with the permission of the EFMD

Appendix: KBS EQUIS Review Schedule, October 2021

KBS EQUIS Peer Review Visit Schedule October 5-8th 2021

Tuesday October 5th 2021

09.00	09.15	Welcome – PRT and School Accreditation Team
09.15	10.15	Initial meeting with the School's Executive Committee
10.15	10.30	Break - Private Breakout Room
10.30	11.00	Areas of Concern or Reservations
11.00	11.30	The School and the Transversal Standards of EQUIS
11.30	12.00	Lunch Break - Private Breakout Room
12.00	12.45	External Governance
12.45	13.30	Overall Programme Portfolio
13.30	14.30	Day 1 PRT Summary Meeting - Private Breakout Room

Wednesday October 6th

09.00	09.15	Day 2 Preparatory Meeting - Private Breakout Room
09.15	10.00	Selected Programme – Programme Director(s) and Administrators responsible for the programme.
10.00	10.15	Break - Private Breakout Room
10.15	11.00	Parallel Student Sessions
11.00	11.45	Parallel Student Support & Other Support Services Sessions
11.45	12.15	Lunch Break - Private Breakout Room
12.15	13.00	Faculty Management
13.00	13.45	Research
13.45	14.00	Break - Private Breakout Room
14.00	14.45	Parallel Senior & Junior Faculty Sessions
14.45	15.45	Day 2 PRT Summary Meeting - Private Breakout Room

Thursday October 7th

09.00	09.15	Day 3 Preparatory Meeting - Private Breakout Room
09.15	10.00	Executive Education
10.00	10.15	Break - Private Breakout Room
10.15	11.00	Financial Management and Control
11.00	11.15	Break - Private Breakout Room
11.15	12.00	Parallel Connections with Practice & Alumni (8 per group)
12.00	13.00	Lunch Break - Private Breakout Room
13.00	16.00	PRT Assessment session including Quality Profile discussion

Friday October 8th

09.00	11.00	Day 4 Preparatory Meeting - Private Breakout Room
11.00	11.30	Debriefing and feedback to the School