

Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland

2023

Annual Quality Report
Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
Reporting Period 2021-2022

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PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM
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PREFACE

The **Annual Quality Report (AQR)**; formerly AIQR) forms part of Quality and Qualifications Ireland's (QQI) quality assurance (QA) framework of engagement with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The AQR provides documentary evidence of the development and evolution of each institution's internal quality system. It provides QQI with assurance that internal QA procedures have been established and are being implemented consistent with regulatory requirements.

The AQR, particularly part A, should assist with **document management** in the institutional review process and will facilitate institutions in providing review teams with procedural QA documentation in preparation for the external review process. It is an important part of the evidence base considered by external **review teams** as part of QQI's CINNTE cycle of institutional reviews, demonstrating that the institution's internal QA system is aligned with QQI's Core and relevant Sector- and Topic-specific Statutory QA Guidelines, and with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area 2015 (ESG). It enables the review team to satisfy itself of compliance with these requirements for the purpose of the institutional review process.

Each AQR is **published in full on QQI's website**, providing transparency on the HEIs' assurance and enhancement of quality to external stakeholders. (As such, institutions should ensure that their submissions do not contain any data that they consider to be commercially sensitive.) Collectively, the AQRs comprise a single national repository of quality assurance practice in Irish higher education institutions.

Each year, QQI produces a synthesis report of the key themes highlighted across the AQRs, primarily arising from Part B of the reports.

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Guidelines on Completing the Report

The AQR is aligned with QQI's Core, Sector and Topic-specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines and with the ESG (2015). A mapping of the ESG to QQI Core QA Guidelines is included in Table 1 below; the structure of Part A of this report template aligns with the first column of the table. Additional guidance on completing this template and reference material is included in each section. Institutions should adhere to this guidance and have regard to QQI Core, Sector and Topic-specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines. **The guide text within each section should be deleted before submission of the report.**

Submission Process and Timeline

The deadline for submission of the AQR each year is in February of the relevant year, with the call for submission sent to institutions in November of the preceding year. Once the call for submission has been made, QQI will provide access to QQI's provider portal, QHub, to the designated institution contact(s) to facilitate submission of the report. Through QHub, each institution will have access to an editable version of its AQR for the previous reporting period. This document can then be amended/updated to reflect any changes or developments that occurred during the current reporting period before submitting the final report to QQI.

Completing the AQR

- When completing the AQR template, all relevant colleagues in the institution should be consulted.
- Consider whether external audiences will be able to understand the terminology used (particularly local abbreviations and acronyms); it may be helpful to include a glossary.
- Aim to avoid duplication in the report - where information is relevant to more than one section, the first mention may be referenced in subsequent sections.
- Provide reflections on what worked well, but also what may have been tried but did not work.

Report Structure

Part A: Internal QA System

Part A of the AQR comprises a record of each institution's current QA policies and procedures and should provide links to those policies and procedures. Private HEIs may provide links to the policies and procedures approved by QQI during initial access to validation (IAV) or reengagement. It is the responsibility of each HEI to ensure before submission of the AQR that all links are correct and functional, and that the policies and procedures referred to are the most up-to-date versions available. Given that the AQR is submitted in respect of a discrete reporting period, it may be helpful for institutions to establish a SharePoint/OneDrive folder (or similar) for each reporting period that contains the current versions of their policies and procedures, and that hyperlinks to these versions of the documents be provided in the AQR

Part A is to be completed only if there have been **material** changes to QA policies and procedures during the reporting period. Such changes may include the approval and implementation of new policies or procedures, or significant amendments to existing ones.

Part B: Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Enhancement (QE)

Part B of the AQR documents and captures QA activities, developments and enhancements undertaken by institutions **during the reporting period** and their **impact**. Insofar as is possible, institutions should demonstrate in Part B how plans set out in the previous AQR were progressed during the reporting period - these may be plans linked to strategic objectives, to reengagement advices, or to institutional review recommendations.

Case Studies

In each reporting period, QQI may request updates on specific thematic areas or may invite the institution to submit case studies in response to specific topics. Further, institutions may include case studies to share good practice on topics of their choosing, demonstrating QA and QE in action. In formulating case studies, institutions are encouraged to reflect on and highlight areas that may be of interest to other institutions and would benefit from wider dissemination. Further guidance is provided in Part B.

Links to Reference Documents Cited in this Template¹

Legislation

- [Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act 2012 \(as amended\)](#)
- [Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992 \(as amended\)](#)
- [Technological Universities Act 2018](#)
- [Universities Act 1997](#)

QQI Documents

Statutory QA Guidelines (QAG)

- [Core QAG](#)
- [Sector-specific QAG for Independent/Private Providers](#)
- [Sector-specific QAG for Designated Awarding Bodies](#)
- [Sector-specific QAG for Institutes of Technology](#)
- [Topic-specific QAG for Providers of Statutory Apprenticeship Programmes](#)
- [Topic-specific QAG for Providers of Research Degree Programmes](#)
- [Topic-specific QAG for Blended Learning](#)

Other QQI Policy Documents

- [QQI's Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes, and Joint Awards, 2012](#)
- [QQI's Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners, 2015](#)
- [QQI Policy Restatement on Access, Transfer and Progression, 2015](#)

Other National/International References

- [European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area \(2015\)](#)
- [IHEQN Guidelines on Collaborative Provision](#)
- [National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland](#)
- [Ireland's Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes, 2019](#)
- [HEA National Framework for Doctoral Education](#)
- [The Salzburg Principles](#)
- [The Salzburg II Recommendations](#)
- [SOLAS Code of Practice for Employers and Apprentices](#)
- [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#)

¹ These links will be updated as further guidance documents are published.

PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Table 1

Table 1 Mapping of ESG (2015) to QQI QA Guidelines (QAG)				
AQR Part A Section	QQI QAG Core Sub-section No.	QAG Core Sub-section Title	ESG Standard No.	ESG Standard Title
1.0 - Internal QA Framework	2.1	Governance and Management of Quality	1.1	Policy for Quality Assurance
	2.2	Documented Approach to Quality Assurance		
2.0 - Programme Development and Delivery	2.3	Programmes of Education and Training	1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
4.0 - QA of Research Activities and Programmes			1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - Monitoring and Periodic Review				
5.0 - Staff Recruitment, Development and Support	2.4	Staff Recruitment, Management and Development	1.5	Teaching Staff
2.3 - Teaching, Learning and Assessment	2.5	Teaching and Learning	1.3	Student-centred Teaching, Learning and Assessment
	2.6	Assessment of Learners		
3.0 - Learner Resources and Supports	2.7	Supports for learners	1.6	Learning Resources and Student Support
6.0 - Information and Data Management	2.8	Information and Data Management	1.7	Information Management
7.0 - Public Information and Communication	2.9	Public Information and Communication	1.8	Public Information
2.0 - Programme Delivery and Development	2.10	Other Parties Involved in Education and Training	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - Monitoring and Periodic Review			1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
9.0 - Details of Arrangements with Third Parties				
2.0 - Programme Development and Delivery	2.11	Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - Monitoring and Periodic Review			1.10	Cyclical External Quality Assurance
4.0 - QA of Research Activities and Programmes	QAG for Providers of Research Degree Programmes			

Introduction and Overview of Institution

This is the AQR for RCSI for the reporting period **1 September 2021 - 31 August 2022**.

The AQR has been approved by the RCSI Quality Committee and is submitted by Aisling Reast, Head of the Quality Enhancement Office.

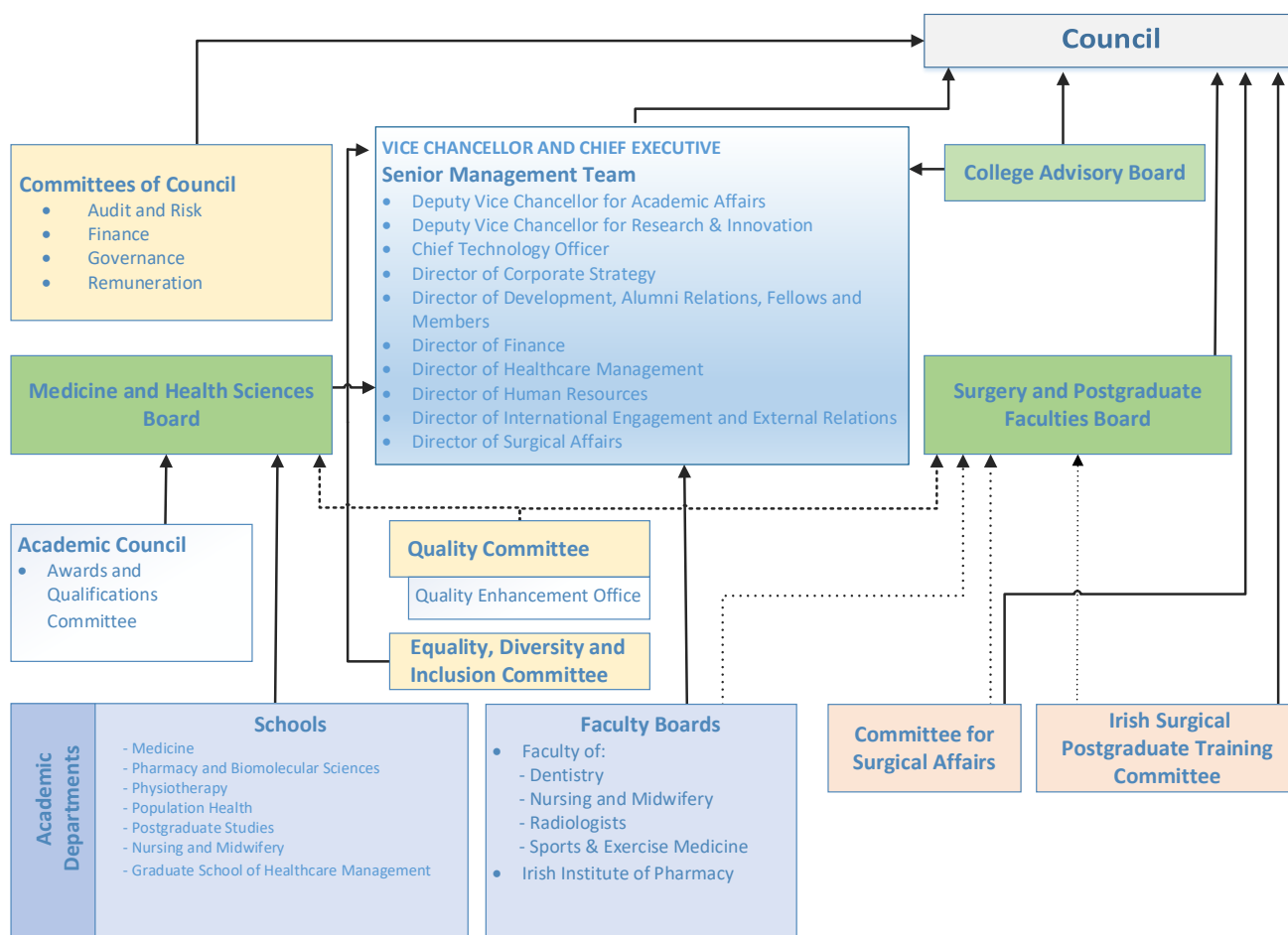
The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) was established by Royal Charter in 1784 to set and support professional standards for surgical training and practice in Ireland. RCSI has evolved considerably in the intervening years and is now both a health sciences university and a postgraduate training body in surgery and related specialties. This dual role brings many advantages to the institution, not least of which is the ability to offer education and training at all career levels (i.e., undergraduate, postgraduate & professional) in medicine, surgery and related disciplines. In fact, it is the only surgical or medical Royal College in these islands to have university status. RCSI is the largest medical school in Ireland and awards undergraduate and postgraduate degrees including those leading to entry level healthcare qualifications in Medicine, Pharmacy, Physiotherapy, and Physician Associates in Dublin; Medicine and Nursing in Bahrain; Medicine in Penang (RUMC- RCSI & UCD Malaysia Campus) and Kuala Lumpur (Perdana), and masters (taught & by research) and doctoral programmes variously in Ireland, Bahrain, China and Malaysia. RCSI became a Recognised College of the National University of Ireland (NUI) in 1978. Following an institutional review commissioned jointly by the Higher Education Authority and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, RCSI's independent degree awarding powers were activated by ministerial order in 2010 pursuant to the terms of The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (Charters Amendment) Act 2003. The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 established RCSI as a Designated Awarding Body. In 2019 RCSI received authorisation to use the description 'University' and to style itself accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Amendment Act 2019.

The Annual Quality Report was prepared by the Quality Enhancement Office (QEO) following extensive consultation with Schools, Faculties and Professional Services Units, prior to consideration and approval by RCSI Senior Management and the Quality Committee.

1.0 Internal QA Framework

1.1 Governance and Management of Quality

Established initially as a surgical Royal College, RCSI is governed by the Council. The governance structure has evolved considerably over time, reflecting the subsequent development of RCSI as a higher education institution, the advent of independent degree awarding powers, changes in best practice in higher education governance and university designation. The current structure is summarised below.



When its independent degree-awarding powers were activated in 2010, RCSI established the Medicine & Health Sciences Board (MHSB) and Surgery & Postgraduate Faculties Board (SPFB). MHSB is the governing body for all RCSI educational programmes leading to National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) awards, while SPFB is the cognate body governing RCSI postgraduate/professional training. Both of these Boards operate under authority for specified non-surgical matters delegated to them by Council. Council retained a number of 'Reserved Powers', mostly concerned with financial governance and oversight of RCSI, and these are exercised through the functions of the Finance Committee and the Audit and Risk Committee. In recognition of the growing complexity and breadth of RCSI's activities beyond Surgery, Council in 2013 established the College Advisory Board as an overall advisory body for RCSI. Within this governance structure, the key decision making for quality assurance within RCSI are the Quality Committee, MHSB and SPFB.

The RCSI Quality Committee (QC) is responsible for the creation of policy and for the implementation of quality processes and quality assurance/quality improvement (QA/QI) activities across academic and administrative areas of all RCSI campuses. The Quality Committee reports both to MHSB and to SPFB. The QC has two standing sub-committees reporting to it, the Academic Integrity Working Group (AIWG) and the Institutional Review

Working Group (IRWG). The AIWG is a formal structure to allow RCSI to monitor and respond to initiatives launched by the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) and by QQI in the area of Academic Integrity. The IRWG is responsible for the management of Institutional Reviews conducted by QQI. The QC also plays a significant role in integrating QA activities on overseas campuses into the overall QA system, and in supporting these campuses in their interactions with local QA/QI structures and processes. RCSI Bahrain has a local Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC). A report on its activities is presented at each QC, and the Chair of the QEC is a member of the QC.

The QEO is the executive function of the RCSI Quality Committee (QC) and of its sub-committees, and reports to the Vice Chancellor & CEO of RCSI. The role of the QEO is to support the implementation of the RCSI QA/QI strategy by coordinating all relevant activities and by collecting the data needed to allow the QC to quality assure programme delivery. The QEO has four members of staff. A new Head of the QEO was appointed at the end of 2021. The three additional staff members are the Director of Psychometrics, the Quality Reviews Manager and the QA/QI Analyst. The Head of the QEO reports to the Chair of the Quality Committee, the Vice Chancellor & CEO.

The RCSI Awards & Qualifications Committee (A&QC) has authority and operational responsibility delegated by MHSB to evaluate and consider educational programmes which fall under the NFQ for approval and accreditation, and to carry out periodic Programmatic Reviews. The A&QC policies and procedures for the accreditation of new degree programmes are designed to satisfy the requirements of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and those of the National University of Ireland.

The QC and QEO contribute to institutional strategic planning by routinely providing key data to RCSI governance structures and Senior Management Team, including primarily (i) student and staff satisfaction and engagement data derived from ongoing survey activity, and (ii) the insights and recommendations arising from internal QA reviews. In addition, the QEO facilitates thematic reviews to inform the strategic planning process. For example, in 2017, the QEO facilitated a thematic review of implementation of the previous Strategic Plan (2013-2017) carried out by a six-member international Review Panel. This review provided a series of recommendations which informed the development of the new RCSI Strategic Plan 2018-2022.

The RCSI Quality Assurance Framework document presents the University's quality policy, principles and definition of quality, provides a comprehensive description of governance structures relevant to quality assurance and gives an overview of internal and external quality assurance processes.

A wide range of external stakeholders are involved in quality assurance within RCSI and their involvement is governed by the relevant policies and procedures; these include:

- Representatives of the public interest on governing boards and advisory committees (including RCSI Council, Medicine & Health Sciences Board, Surgery & Postgraduate Faculties Board, College Advisory Board, Quality Committee, Academic Council, etc.)
- External members of Peer Review Groups in Internal Quality Assurance Reviews
- External members of Programmatic Review Panels (appointed jointly by RCSI & NUI)
- External Examiners for educational programmes leading to the award of degrees (appointed jointly by RCSI & NUI)
- External members of Accreditation Panels visiting RCSI on behalf of the Professional Regulatory Statutory Bodies (Irish Medical Council, Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland, CORU, etc.)

Our students are key stakeholders in quality assurance and at all levels of RCSI internal governance. The Presidents of both Students' Unions are members of the Quality Committee, and Students' Union Officers and Class Representatives are members of internal governance committees up to and including the Medicine & Health Sciences Board. In addition, the views of students are invited through the student feedback processes described below. RCSI also engages with staff as stakeholders through periodic Staff Surveys, which are administered and processed by the QEO in the same way as the student surveys. Where input from other

external stakeholders is required, for example as part of the internal review process for Professional Services Units, this process is facilitated by the QEO in terms of targeted surveys and, occasionally, formal or informal focus groups.

RCSI is committed to carrying out research to the highest standards of professionalism and scientific rigour and, to that end, has a comprehensive suite of policies and procedures governing research activity and its quality assurance developed by the Office of Research & Innovation (ORI) and the School of Postgraduate Studies (SPGS). The University's approach to research conduct and integrity aligns with the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (which specifies four fundamental principles that underpin all research integrity and good practice), with the National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland) and with Ireland's Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes (QQI). The policies and procedures developed and implemented by the ORI cover all aspects of research practice including research ethics, the acquisition and management of funding, publication policy, bibliometric indices, etc.; these are contained in the 'Researchers' Handbook', a comprehensive document available to all researchers and research support staff. All of these policies are subject to regular review and updating as required. These documents are disseminated to students and staff via the Staff Portal and virtual learning environment. The SPGS manages all research programmes leading to higher degree awards. The SPGS Committee is responsible for overall governance and management of the School. The Postgraduate Programme Management Committee, which has responsibility for policy oversight and engagement with the academic directors of all taught postgraduate programmes in RCSI, and the Academic Review Committee (ARC), which reviews all new applications for research degrees and ensures efficient and timely registration of new students with quality research proposals, both report to the SPGS Committee. The RCSI Awards and Qualifications Committee has responsibility, with authority delegated by MHSB, for the validation, revalidation and review of all programmes leading to degree awards of RCSI. As such it maintains oversight of all postgraduate programmes (taught and by research), considering new programme proposals and any changes required to existing programmes. A&QC also undertakes rolling Programmatic Reviews. Within SPGS, the PhD programme was reviewed in 2012 and the MD programme was reviewed in 2018. The Quality Enhancement Office (QEO) also carries out reviews of Schools, Faculties and Professional Services Units within RCSI. The Office of Research and Innovation participated in an Internal Quality Review in November 2021.

1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision

RCSI is a Designated Awarding Body (DAB) pursuant to the terms of The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. The legislation established the category of Linked Provider (LP), which refers to a higher education provider which enters into a formal arrangement with a DAB under which the LP delivers a programme of education & training that satisfies the prerequisites for an award of the DAB. RCSI has developed a strategy and operating model for engaging with providers seeking LP status, but the University does not have any Linked Providers currently.

RCSI is involved in a range of instances of transnational, collaborative and franchise-based educational provision across its international branch campuses and international programmes. The Quality Committee has overall responsibility for the governance of quality assurance and enhancement across these programmes and campuses as described in the [RCSI Quality Assurance Framework](#). The Framework provides for Annual Programme Monitoring of transnational, collaborative and franchise programmes and for periodic Quality Assurance Review of overseas branch campuses and international programmes. In addition, all RCSI branch campuses and overseas transnational/collaborative programmes are subject to local quality assurance and professional accreditation processes in the jurisdictions where they operate.

RCSI does not have a formal policy for the development of new collaborative (or transnational) provision arrangements currently. However, RCSI activities in this area are informed by and conform to the IHEQN '[Guidelines for the Approval, Monitoring and Review of Collaborative and Transnational Provision](#)' (2013) and the NUI policy on '[Quality Assurance for Collaborative and Transnational Provision of Academic Programmes Leading to NUI Qualifications](#)' (2013). When evaluating a potential new collaborative programme with an existing partner, or a new arrangement with a candidate partner institution, the RCSI Corporate Strategy Office is responsible for the initial due diligence and for assessing the viability of the proposed programme in conjunction with the relevant School or Faculty. If a new programme is deemed viable and receives the approval of Senior Management and of the relevant governing boards, a specific project team is established to develop the programme proposal, to draft a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for agreement with the candidate partner institution and to prepare an application to the Awards & Qualifications Committee for programme validation. All such MOUs include specific provision for adherence to RCSI quality assurance policies and procedures including Annual Programme Monitoring and periodic Quality Assurance Review. New transnational programmes proposed by RCSI branch campuses are subject to the programme approval and validation processes administered by the Awards & Qualifications Committee.

Periodic Quality Assurance Review of overseas branch campuses and international programmes is a powerful tool to ensure that instances of transnational/collaborative provision continue to meet the strategic priorities of RCSI and the needs of the partner institutions, and to manage the risks implicit in international education provision. One of the four parallel cycles of Internal Quality Assurance Reviews administered by the Quality Enhancement Office addresses RCSI overseas branch campuses and international programmes and, as described above, participation in these processes is mandated by the relevant MOU. The review process is similar to that for internal reviews at RCSI Dublin, though review panels take a broader view which encompasses strategic aspects of the relationship between the partners, the quality of the international student experience and local conditions impinging on programme delivery.

2.0 Programme Development and Delivery

2.1 Programme Development and Approval

The RCSI Awards & Qualifications Committee is responsible for the approval and validation of new educational programmes leading to RCSI degree awards aligned with the National Framework of Qualifications, encompassing the quality assurance of their design. It is responsible also for the revalidation of existing programmes to which Minor or Major Changes are proposed by Schools within the University of Medicine & Health Sciences. The A&QC policies and procedures for the accreditation of new degree programmes are designed to satisfy the degree-awarding requirements of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and those of the National University of Ireland. This derives from the fact that Schedule 3 (9) of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 introduced Section 47A to the Universities Act 1997 which provides that the degrees & qualifications of RCSI shall be degrees & qualifications of the NUI where they are approved by the NUI and while RCSI remains a recognised college of the NUI. In 2019, RCSI was authorised to use the title “university” in Ireland, having been authorised to do so overseas since 2015.

RCSI does not offer apprenticeships or work-based learning programmes of the type encompassed by the Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for Providers of Statutory Apprenticeship Programmes (i.e., those governed by The Industrial Training Act 1967).

For new RCSI programmes leading to degree awards, the process administered by the A&QC involves two stages: [1] establishment of a Business Case and [2] development of an Academic Proposal. Once a Business Case for a new programme has been submitted, it is reviewed internally by the A&QC Business Case Review Panel and feedback is given to the proposer. If/when the final Business Case has been approved by A&QC, a recommendation is made to the RCSI Senior Management Team which, if approved, will permit the proposer to progress to the second stage. The Academic Proposal undergoes an internal review by the A&QC Academic Case Review Panel. When the programme is approved by the internal reviewers the programme is then subject to external assessment by an academic from outside the jurisdiction with expertise in the subject area. This is an iterative process and when both internal and external assessors approve the application, and any changes made during the process, the application recommended to the Academic Council for RCSI approval by Medicine & Health Sciences Board (MHSB). The programme proposal may also be subject to external review by a NUI appointed external assessor, depending on the type of award. All programmes leading to major awards in the NFQ will be reviewed by at least two External Assessors, but a jointly appointed External Assessor may be sufficient for programmes leading to minor, special purpose or supplemental awards. Following a similar review process, where applicable, the application is presented for NUI approval to NUI Senate.

The processes involved in developing the Academic Case for a new programme are rigorous and require the proposers to demonstrate a systematic approach to programme design which aligns the programme appropriately to the relevant Level in the NFQ. This involves a comprehensive description of the hierarchical curriculum structure starting from Programme-level outcomes which are mapped clearly to the relevant NFQ level descriptors in terms of the domains of knowledge, skill and competence. A complete set of Module Descriptors is required which demonstrate the mapping of module outcomes to programme-level outcomes and to the portfolio of module-specific assessments. The Academic Case proposal form also requires a detailed description of European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credit assignments, entry requirements, provisions for access, transfer and progression, programme delivery schedules, professional/regulatory considerations and articulation arrangements (where relevant). The duration of the internal and external phases of the review process for new proposals varies depending on the completeness of the submission received from the proposers. The review is iterative and can be extended if additional time is required to clarify aspects of the proposal and/or to permit adequate consultation with relevant stakeholders.

Changes to existing programmes are evaluated by the A&QC against sectoral standards including the provisions of the NUI 'Regulations, Procedures and Guidelines for the Approval of New Programmes and Changes to Existing Programmes in the Recognised Colleges' (2020). Major changes to existing programmes are subject to a process similar to the Academic Proposal review for new programmes, while minor changes are subject to a less extensive review, with final approval in both cases by MHSB and NUI Senate.

The A&QC also administers a rolling cycle of Programmatic Reviews of all RCSI programmes which lead to qualifications or awards on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and which fall under the governance of the Medicine and Health Science Board and the National University of Ireland. Programmatic Reviews involve the preparation of a Self-evaluation Report by the relevant programme director, a two-day site-visit facilitated by a three-person panel (one external member nominated by RCSI, one external member nominated by NUI & one internal RCSI panel member), submission of a review report, and presentation of the report to MHSB and to the NUI Senate. The possible outcomes of the Programmatic Review process are:

- a) Full Confidence with revalidation for a period of five years;
- b) Limited Confidence with quality improvement planning and follow-up; or
- c) No Confidence with consequent discontinuation of the degree programme.

2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification

The RCSI [website](#) contains all of the relevant information related to student admission for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. This includes course curricula and detailed guidance on entry requirements, fees and application processes for Irish/EU and Non-EU students, plus additional guidance for students applying via the school leaver, mature entry and graduate entry routes. The website provides access to various policy documents that underpin aspects of the admissions process including fees, widening participation, scholarships and guidance on the admissions interview and personal statement process. As well as formal information, the website also provides access to details of Open Days and webinars, access to prospectuses and contact information for additional queries.

Registration is now predominantly completed online. Undergraduate students receive their IT network login and RCSI email account details prior to induction. Students are also provided with links to useful IT training videos to help familiarisation with IT systems such as Blackboard Collaborate and Moodle. Induction takes place on the first day of each new academic year and the formal programme consists of short talks outlining the key facilities and services including CoMPPAS (Centre for Mastery: Personal, Professional & Academic Success), IT, Student Health, Library, Health & Safety, Students Union, Clubs & Societies and Sports Facilities. Students are issued with their RCSI student cards, which give access to the library, gym, computer labs and other areas of the RCSI campus. RCSI offers first year undergraduate students with a formal induction programme which comprises a series of lectures and workshops on assorted topics including study skills, self-care, support services, etc.

RCSI postgraduates are provided with an induction programme in October and April each year. A welcome handbook is also provided (via Moodle) to new postgraduate research scholars, detailing information and supports for living in Ireland and studying at RCSI.

RCSI has a strict no transfer policy for undergraduate programmes and does not accept transfer requests from students attending other courses, including other RCSI courses and RCSI international campuses. A transfer policy is in place to permit, in some circumstances, transfer between RCSI Postgraduate Research Programmes (PGR) or from other institutions into RCSI PGR programmes.

Progression is determined by 'Marks and Standards' documents which are created and published for each year of each programme. These documents outline the standards and criteria which must be satisfied in order to progress to the next stage of the programme. These are made available to students via the Moodle virtual

learning environment, together with policies on the relevant appeals processes. Progression rates and graduate numbers for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes are reported annually by the RCSI Registry part of the Student, Academic & Regulatory Affairs (SARA) office, as part of the suite of RCSI internal key performance indicators reports. Progression in postgraduate research programmes at NFQ level 10 is subject to completion of an annual progress review (report, mini-viva-voce and reviewer feedback) assessed by two content experts. Forms and guidelines are available via Moodle.

RCSI has a policy on Recognition of Prior Learning and its applicability to individual programmes and methods of assessment are included in individual course material.

Students' grades are delivered to them directly, and on a confidential basis, electronically (via Student Gateway or email) as soon as is practicable following the relevant Examinations Board meeting. At the end of each academic year, students are sent a cumulative transcript of their results at their request. These transcripts provide an overall module result for all modules taken by that student to date. An annual transcript is also provided to all sponsoring bodies for each of their students which provide an overall module result for all modules taken by that student in the relevant academic year only.

RCSI has a particular commitment to widening participation in its educational programmes and, to this end, offers a range of scholarships. Of particular note in this regard is the Traveller Community Access Programme (TCAP) Scholarship, which aims to increase the participation of members of the Traveller Community in the University's undergraduate programmes. The TCAP Scholarship provides reduced points entry, financial support and opportunities for students from the community who might otherwise be unable to attend third level education due to social disadvantage or financial constraints. RCSI participates in the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR), which supports school leavers from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) which supports students applying to RCSI with a disability.

2.3 Procedures for Making Awards

The processes implemented by RCSI for the validation of new programmes and the revalidation of existing programmes leading to awards require a rigorous and systematic approach to programme design as described above (Section 2.1).

The core of any curriculum is the set of programme-level learning outcomes which describe the attributes that students will acquire and demonstrate as they progress through the course. These top-level outcomes are mapped to the relevant NFQ level descriptors in terms of the domains of knowledge, skill and competence. For the majority of RCSI programmes which lead to professional healthcare degree awards, the programme-level learning outcomes are mapped also to the standards specified by the relevant Professional Regulatory and Statutory Body (PRSB). A good example of this is provided by the process undertaken to establish the programme-level learning outcomes for the RCSI medical degree (MB, BCh, BAO) programme.

The programme-level learning outcomes for the medical degree are set out in the RCSI Medical Graduate Profile (MGP). The MGP articulates the attributes needed for the distinct roles that are integrated in clinical practice, and thus provides the foundation for the education that students receive. The MGP is based on the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada Competency Framework which integrates seven intrinsic roles of the physician (Professional; Communicator; Scholar; Collaborator; Leader; Global Practitioner; Clinically Skilled Doctor). It also complies with the stipulations regarding curriculum standards and design contained in the World Federation of Medical Education (WFME) Guidelines, the standards adopted by the Irish Medical Council (PRSB). Development of the MGP was informed by a process of consultation with RCSI faculty, researchers, staff, students, alumni, national postgraduate training bodies, the Irish Medical Council, other health care professionals and patient groups.

Three levels of learning outcomes are encompassed within the MGP. The highest – Level 1 outcomes or ‘Themes’ – are mapped to the NFQ Level descriptors for the Level 8 degree award. Nested beneath the Themes are Level 2 and Level 3 outcomes which are higher level outcomes within each theme. The Level 1, 2 & 3 learning outcomes in the MGP inform the structure and content of the individual course modules across the five academic years of the programme. Level 4 outcomes are the overarching module outcomes, while Level 5 outcomes are those for individual learning activities within each module (lectures, practicals, clinical skills & simulation sessions, etc.). Therefore, taken together, the five levels of learning outcome constitute a hierarchical framework which demonstrates how each learning activity contributes to the students’ acquisition of the attributes set out in the MGP.

Assessment is another core element of any curriculum, providing mechanisms (which are appropriate and fit for purpose) to allow students to demonstrate their attainment of the learning outcomes. The development of RCSI curricula involves the elaboration of a system of assessments which, at each stage of the programme, permits representative and relevant sampling of the students’ knowledge, skills and attitudes as required by the learning outcomes. The assessment system must [a] demonstrate mapping of each assessment to the relevant learning outcomes, [b] involve as wide a variety of assessment types as possible to encompass the scope of the curriculum and [c] specify how the relative weightings of content within assessments correspond to the learning outcomes. The key principle is that of Constructive Alignment between learning outcomes, teaching & learning activities and assessment. The tool used to demonstrate this is Assessment Blueprinting, which links assessment type, relative weighting of content within assessments and learning outcomes. Assessment blueprints are developed at module-and programme-level to demonstrate appropriate alignment across the programme.

The curriculum development process also requires that assessment processes be robust, consistent & transparent. The entire assessment process (including purpose, location, timing, format, methodology, etc.) must be defined, applied consistently and made available to all relevant stakeholders. The assessment process must also be underpinned by equally well-defined and applied governance & quality assurance procedures. For award-stage assessments in particular, assessment systems are required to incorporate standard setting methods to determine appropriate pass/fail cut-off points (‘cut-scores’). In the health sciences, and particularly for high-stakes assessments, international best practice involves the use of standard setting methods that are test-centred or examinee-centred, and that factor the judgement of experts into the process of determining the cut-score. Thus, RCSI programmes typically use test-centred standard setting methods for MCQ-based tests of knowledge (e.g., the Bookmark & Angoff methods) and examinee-centred methods for tests of skills & attitudes (e.g., the Borderline Regression method for Objective Structured Clinical Examinations).

Curriculum design (including assessment) is subject to expert internal and external review during the programme validation process managed by the Awards & Qualifications Committee, and during the process of periodic revalidation and/or programmatic review. In addition, external examiners are appointed who have oversight of curriculum delivery and assessment and who offer an independent perspective on the appropriateness and fairness of examinations.

Training and guidance on all aspects of curriculum design are available to RCSI faculty through the Health Professions Education Centre (HPEC) and the Awards & Qualifications Committee.

2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

The quality assurance of teaching, learning & assessment in educational programmes leading to RCSI degree awards is managed on an ongoing basis by academic schools, internal governance committees, examination boards and Registry functions, through the monitoring and analysis of multiple data streams:

- Student feedback surveys (semester-based or, exceptionally, more frequent)
- In-course examination results (semester- or academic year-based)
- Exit (*i.e.*, final end of programme) examination results
- External examiners’ reports

- Accreditation reports issued by the relevant Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies
- Annual Programme Monitoring
- Programmatic Review reports

Student feedback surveys run by the Quality Enhancement Office provide an overview of perceptions of the student experience, particularly in relation to teaching, learning & assessment. RCSI survey approach is to apply a centralised core and options model of evaluation across all undergraduate courses and campuses and the majority of postgraduate courses. The use of 'core' questions allows the direct comparison of student experience between instances of the same programme on different sites, between programmes and over time. The use of 'optional' questions allows for the specific/targeted collection of information, e.g., students' reaction to a new teaching intervention. The vital role played by the QEO ensures that the data is collected, processed and reported in a consistent way that allows for an in-depth analysis and also protects the confidentiality of students' views. The QEO provides feedback reports for each year of each programme twice a year (at the end of each semester) or once a year (at the end of semester 2), determined by whether or not the content is delivered by discrete semesters. Cycle/Programme Directors use this information in conjunction with academic performance and other data to determine what (if any) changes need to be made for the subsequent year. This information should be communicated back to the students by the Schools at the start of the next academic year in the form of a Quality Improvement Plan either verbally (during one of the first lectures of the year) or via the Moodle virtual learning environment. During this reporting period the QEO undertook a project to plan a process to centralise the collection and reporting of quality improvement actions. The quantitative survey response data are made available directly to students via Moodle shortly after the data has been processed. In addition to the curriculum feedback, separate reports are prepared for the heads of professional services functions – for example the RCSI Library, Student Academic and Regulatory Affairs, CoMPPAS, IT Department etc. Externally, feedback on student engagement is collected independently from first and final year undergraduate students and from postgraduate taught and research students via StudentSurvey.ie. This nationwide survey aims to measure student engagement in all participating third level institutions and allows individual institutions to benchmark against the rest of the sector. This process is facilitated and reported by the Quality Enhancement Office.

Regulations regarding assessment are finalised and approved by MHSB each May, in advance of the following academic session and are made available to students in the form of 'Marks & Standards' documents. These documents contain information about the, format, quantity and weighting of assessments as well as details about progression and remediation policies and procedures. The results of all assessments are subject to review by a range of stakeholders at all stages of the assessment process. Academic and administrative staff review raw performance data for anomalies before data is processed. RCSI has a system of internal moderation which takes place after all summative assessments and in advance of Examination Board meetings. This process of internal moderation demonstrates that best practice is applied consistently across RCSI in its assessments. For first sitting assessments, a representative sample of the cohort is moderated and this includes a higher proportion of work that has been first marked as a 'fail' or at the 'borderline' between marking/grading bands. For supplemental assessments a representative sample of the cohort must include all failing scripts. External examiners are appointed to participate in the assessment creation and review process as well as having an input into progression decisions (see below). Where appropriate, passing standards are determined and maintained using appropriate methods incorporating a range of appropriate stakeholders. Progression decisions are made by Examination Boards, which are composed of a range of appropriate stakeholders including relevant academic staff, external examiners and administrative staff. Examination Boards evaluate assessment data in conjunction with the appropriate regulations and other relevant information (e.g., exceptional circumstances) to make progression decisions. In the event that the Examination Board mandates any changes (e.g., moving a borderline performance up/down into a different category), the decision and supporting reasons are recorded. Students' marks and grades are delivered directly and on a confidential basis (electronically) as soon as is practicable following the relevant Examinations Board meeting. In the event that a student believes that a decision is the result of a procedural irregularity, or if they if they possess evidence of relevant exceptional circumstances which

was not available to the original decision makers when its decision was reached, RCSI has a well-developed appeals procedure.

External examiners, as independent external peers, play a vital role in the ongoing quality assurance of degree programmes at RCSI. The Medicine & Health Sciences Board approves external examiners and informs the NUI Senate, which approves and appoints them. These examiners report directly to NUI and thence to RCSI. For undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes, they have access to examination results and to examples of students' assessed work, and they are involved in aspects of the examinations process and in Examination Board meetings. For research degree programmes, they are involved in the examination of the thesis and, for Level 10 awards (MD & PhD), in the *viva voce* examination of the candidate.

As a health sciences university and postgraduate/professional training body, many RCSI educational and training programmes are subject to accreditation by the relevant Professional Regulatory and Statutory Bodies (PRSBs). These are the Irish Medical Council, the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland, CORU (The Health & Social Care Professions Regulator) and the Nursing & Midwifery Board of Ireland. Each PRSB undertakes periodic monitoring and accreditation site-inspections to RCSI to assess compliance of the relevant degree or professional training programme with their accreditation standards. The reports arising from these site-inspections provide a valuable external perspective on the status of programmes and include useful recommendations for quality enhancement.

Annual Programme Monitoring (APM) is a concise mechanism which gathers data on the operation of educational programmes building on the previous year's achievements, addressing issues raised in external examiner reports & student feedback and presenting plans for the coming academic year. When implemented consistently, APM builds an evidence base documenting programme performance in the interval between initial programme validation and periodic programmatic review. The [RCSI Quality Assurance Framework](#) provides for Annual Programme Monitoring of transnational, collaborative and franchise programmes currently.

Programmatic Reviews take place on a rolling cycle which encompasses all RCSI programmes leading to awards on the National Framework of Qualifications. These reviews, carried out by a three-person panel, provide an in-depth analysis of the curriculum and of teaching, learning and assessment provision in each programme examined. The report produced by the review panel provides affirmation of positive aspects of the programme and offers recommendations for quality improvement. While an infrequent outcome, the panel is empowered to recommend a period of quality improvement planning with follow-up or, in extremis, to recommend discontinuation of the degree programme.

RCSI, through the programmes offered by the [Health Professions Education Centre \(HPEC\)](#), endeavours to ensure that all academic staff are actively engaged in the quality assurance and enhancement of their own teaching and assessment activities. Peer observation of teaching is an integral component to educator development at RCSI. HPEC leads the RCSI's active and collaborative peer observation programme; 353 members of staff have availed of this opportunity since its introduction in 2015. HPEC has also partnered with other HEIs on a pilot of inter-institutional peer observation of teaching. HPEC also offers RCSI staff members access to a formal educational qualification through a Postgraduate Diploma in Health Professions Education. This is a one-year, Level 9, 60-credit course which covers four modules: Introduction to Health Professions Education; Principles of Learning and Teaching; Assessment and Feedback in Health Professions Education and Curriculum Design and Evaluation. 240 staff have been awarded a Postgraduate Diploma in Health Professions Education and an additional 19 staff have been awarded postgraduate certificates. A consultancy service offering the opportunity for one-to-one consultations on educational practice and research has been utilised by over 200 staff in the last two years, and an Educational Hub hosts in person and online faculty development opportunities in a wide range of areas.

RCSI, as a university of medicine and health sciences and surgical Royal College, espouses the highest standards of professionalism among students, graduates, postgraduate trainees, Members and Fellows. Academic

Integrity – showing respect for the work of others and acting with honesty and responsibility in preparing and submitting coursework – is a key component of professionalism. Registry, working with the schools, faculties and the Academic Integrity Working Group, maintain a comprehensive suite of documents setting out RCSI policy concerning professionalism, code of conduct, behaviour in examinations, academic integrity, etc. In addition, an RCSI Academic Working Group was established in September 2020 as formal structure to monitor and respond to initiatives launched by National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) and Quality & Qualifications Ireland (QQI) in the area of Academic Integrity. The working group is a sub-Committee of the Quality Committee, thus giving it reporting lines to both Medicine & Health Sciences Board and Surgery and Postgraduate Faculties Board.

3.0 Learner Resources and Support

RCSI is committed to providing a state-of-the-art educational environment for students and trainees and invests constantly in improving existing facilities and creating new ones. Improvements and developments in resources and supports are informed by feedback and deliberations conducted at senior management level, school level and programme level via the relevant governance committees on which students have representation. RCSI routinely collects feedback from students on physical infrastructure and resources such as library and IT facilities through end of semester student evaluations. In addition, feedback from staff and specific service users is collected as part of ongoing QA/QI processes. This feedback is utilised by the appropriate governance committees to inform decisions on the allocation of resources, taking into consideration the needs of the diverse student population. Schools and service departments are also subject internal quality review, the output of which is a quality improvement plan (QIP) based on recommendations of the review panel informed by the evidence gathered from students, staff and other stakeholders. QIPs are published on the RCSI website.

The RCSI Dublin city centre campus received a major enhancement during 2017 through the completion of 26 York Street, a new state-of-the-art facility over 10 floors (six above ground & four below) which provides students, surgical trainees and staff with modern cutting-edge facilities that will promote the development of the RCSI community at the heart of the city. As well as being the home of the new National Surgical & Clinical Training Centre, 26 York Street also includes a 540-seat auditorium, the Centre for Simulation Education & Research, the RCSI library, a sports hall and fitness suite, and has been designed to be both energy efficient and environmentally responsible. In 2018, RCSI also completed Phase 2 of the Education and Research Centre (ERC) on the Beaumont Hospital campus. ERC Phase 2 provides an additional 30,000 sq. ft. of space incorporating a new student concourse at ground floor level to link the new facility with the existing building. The structure includes a series of flexible multi-functional tutorial rooms, open-plan faculty offices and meeting spaces on the first floor, with laboratory and research facilities on the second floor.

During the reporting period, RCSI commenced the building of a new €22 million Education and Research Centre at Connolly Hospital. The three-storey building is designed with two distinct interlocking blocks for academic, faculty and administration functions with a communal atrium area linking the two, providing amenity and support space for students and staff.

RCSI also launched a transformational development at 118 St Stephen's Green during this period. The next phase of RCSI's campus development in Dublin city centre is a €95m expansion project. Also known as Project Connect, it will enrich the student experience at RCSI and provide vital infrastructure for pioneering health sciences research and innovation, as well as creating a space for local community engagement. A key design element of 118 St Stephen's Green is its physical link to RCSI's presence at 26 York Street, significantly opening up RCSI's education space for the estimated 3,000 students and staff who visit the campus daily. The development will include new concepts such as learning communities, small group teaching spaces as well as flexible flat floor teaching spaces. Another key purpose of the project is to enhance RCSI's research and innovation activities, providing up to three floors of state-of-the-art laboratory, write-up and support facilities for existing and new research programmes and initiatives.

RCSI Library Service provides resources, services and facilities to support the learning, teaching, research and clinical activities of the university (see summary diagram below). Online resources and services to RCSI staff and students are described and accessible via the library website, <https://www.rcsi.com/dublin/library>. Focused on health sciences, the working collections are largely online and include an extensive range of biomedical databases, online textbooks, clinical summary tools and electronic journals. The library discovery platform, PrimoVE, enables students and staff to search across, and retrieve items from all online and print collections. Through RCSI membership of the IReL consortium (Irish Research eLibrary), a nationally funded e-resource licensing consortium, RCSI staff and students have access to additional leading Science Technology and Medicine (STM) and Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) resources. RCSI authors (including student authors) also benefit

from open access agreements with publishers facilitated by IReL that typically allow RCSI corresponding authors to publish their articles open access immediately on publication without payment. On-site services and facilities at the award-winning library in the city-centre campus include diverse spaces designed to support individual and group learning and small collections of print books and textbooks. Similar facilities at the RCSI Library in Beaumont Hospital are available to hospital-based students and staff. Library health information specialists assist learners in finding, evaluating, using, and managing information as the basis of evidence-based practice and support development of these skills by providing curriculum-integrated training, dedicated customer services teams at on-site and virtual information desks, and through online guides. Postgraduate students and faculty can avail of bespoke research consultations with expert library staff via email, MS Teams, Blackboard collaborate or conference call. The full suite of library learning support materials is available for review at the RCSI virtual learning environment. Research outputs, and eligible dissertations and theses are available on the RCSI open access repository <https://repository.rcsi.com/>

Education	Impactful Research	Engagement	Contribution
<p>Learning Support Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Library skills curriculum teaching Embedded workshops, lectures, classes Assignment related referencing clinics ✓ Extra-curricular teaching Drop-in workshops End/Note classes Recorded sessions ✓ Information point Enquiries, support, advice ✓ Research & consultation service Specialised queries for staff & students <p>Resources to Support Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Electronic resources Databases, clinical summaries, journals, e-books ✓ Library-authored support materials Videos, LibGuides, manuals ✓ Physical collections Books, journals, DVDs <p>Spaces to Support Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Virtual spaces Website RCSI Library on Moodle YouTube Channel ✓ Physical places Group study rooms Study pods Amphitheatre Reading lounges Computer rooms 	<p>Research Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ RCSI open access research repository ✓ Bibliometrics support to Office of Institutional Research & Planning ✓ Individual author profiling & h-index ✓ Advanced literature searching & systematic review support services ✓ Advisory services on scholarly publishing including copyright and licensing, where to publish, open access publishing ✓ Research data management coordination in collaboration with Data Science Centre, & Office of Innovation & Research ✓ Individual/ research group / departmental consultations <p>Training to Support Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ For Impact: Individual bibliometrics Journal metrics ✓ Increasing Your Visibility: covering: online profiles in SCOPUS, Web of Science, & academic networks, e.g. ResearchGate; using ORCID; open access and the RCSI open access repository ✓ Using SciVal ✓ Altmetrics <p>Resources to Support Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Electronic Collections Databases, journals, bibliometric analysis tools ✓ Library-authored support materials 	<p>User Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Proactive promotion of library resources, services and facilities via outreach activities in situ and social media ✓ Experiential space Expo Stage & Study Pods in the Library Learning Commons support neutral peer to peer engagement and non-academic activities ✓ Customer service excellence Listening & User Experience Methodologies informs service improvements and developments; Customer Voice feeds into service ✓ Relationships & Collaboration Primary collaborators with Estates, IT, Student Services, CoMPASS, Office of Research & Innovation, Office of Institutional Research & Planning, Health Professionals Education Centre, Communications & Events, Beaumont Hospital, Alumni & Development; Schools and SU/Class Reps <p>Public engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Culture Night, Heritage Week, Archives Week, ERASMUS Exchange Week, Library Ireland Week, Public Seminars & exhibitions, Social media & Heritage Blog ✓ Fact checking and source material for RCSI events and VIPs 	<p>Primary Function</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Management and business owner of systems & services to enable discovery, curation and preservation of institutional information assets past and present <p>RCSI Internal Committees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Academic Council ✓ Art Committee ✓ Awards & Qualifications Committee ✓ Student Affairs Committee ✓ FAIR Data Committee ✓ EDI Committee <p>External Committees & Memberships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ CONUL & sub-groups ✓ National Open Research Forum & working groups ✓ IReL ✓ SCOUNL (UK) ✓ LIBER (Europe) ✓ AAHSL (North America)

The RCSI SIM Centre for Simulation Education and Research enables RCSI's mission by delivering transformative learning experiences and leading impactful research. Through collaboration, learner-centeredness, and patient focus, it strives to enable excellent, outcomes-based translational education and research. The centre is accredited by the Network of Accredited Skills Centres in Europe (NASCE) and spans 12,000 sq. The multi-purpose surgical training suite, the fully functioning mock operating theatre, a mock emergency room and mock labour ward provide authentic setting for immersive team training. Each area is equipped with the audio-visual learning system (learning Space CAE) to provide video assisted 360 feedback and video support after event reflection. A particular strength of RCSI SIM lies with the simulated participant (SP) programme, over 100 individuals who support a wide array of curricula at RCSI, both for training and assessment. In line with international best practice, trained SPs facilitate the delivery of consistent repeated educational experiences, which allow learners reach competence through deliberate and repeated practice. The centre incorporates:

- Ten outpatient consultation rooms where simulated participants (professional actors & lay volunteers who have undertaken specific in-house training) assist in developing students' consultation skills.
- Six hospital ward simulation rooms, which use high-fidelity manikins to develop students' clinical skills, as well as to build their confidence in dealing with emergency situations, such as complications during labour.
- A task training laboratory with a full range of teaching models, manikins and task trainers (needle biopsy, insertion of IV lines, etc.).
- A large, fully-equipped and multi-purpose 'wet-lab' accommodating up to 30 students or professional trainees.

- A large Surgical Simulator Suite accommodating 20 trainees with an array of state-of-the-art augmented reality simulators.
- A mock operating room, designed for inter-professional team training and non-technical skills (human factors) training with a separate control room and viewing/debrief room.

In addition to providing training for specific groups of student and postgraduate trainees, the SIM facility hosts inter-professional training activities bringing together students from different programmes in a setting that emulates the experience of working in real-life clinical settings as a surgeon, medical doctor, pharmacist, physiotherapist, nurse, midwife or physician associate. On an annual basis RCSI SIM runs some 380 teaching sessions and courses involving 1,800 students and over 800 postgraduate trainees and paramedics in total.

RCSI has a longstanding history of supporting students through the provision of modern technology to facilitate learning. All students have access to the full Microsoft suite of services, including OneDrive cloud storage, email, Office 365 applications and Teams online meetings. When students start with RCSI, digital training is provided through drop-in sessions with IT, online videos, and presentations on IT Support services. Undergraduate students are provided with laptops, to ensure that they are digitally equipped both while studying online and when on clinical placements. An extensive range of applications are provided by RCSI to support learning and students including:

- Moodle: This virtual learning environment provides students with access to their timetable, course material, online lectures, and access to professional services support including Registry, Academic Affairs, library and IT.
- Blackboard Collaborate: Online lectures and tutorials are managed on blackboard collaborate.
- TurningPoint: This service allows students to interact during lectures, e.g., polls, quizzes.
- Library: A vast range of online services are available to students, including a substantial catalogue of journals and databases.
- MyRCSI: A student app developed in collaboration with the Students Union that signposts students to all their digital services from one central location.
- Practique: An assessment system which supports a variety of assessment types.
- Kaizen: An e-portfolio system which supports assessment, the provision of timely feedback and a number of academic processes.
- InPlace: A system to support placement management.
- CareerHub: A portal supporting career management.
- Electives: Enables students apply for clinical electives.
- Mentor Network: Enables students to connect to alumni mentors across the world.
- Student Life HQ: A new online hub for students Clubs and Societies to enable them manage their organisations and hold events online.

RCSI's Centre for Mastery Personal, Professional & Academic Success (CoMPPAS) provides a comprehensive pastoral care support framework to all students, while the Student Services Office delivers a range of non-academic services to support student engagement and enhance the student journey. RCSI has a diverse student body and the specific pastoral care needs of international students substantially represent the mainstream concern of the University and the focus of pastoral and academic support service provision. As such, services have been designed to fully integrate those needs as core to the provision of services.

CoMPPAS is an integrated multi-disciplinary team of professionals and specialists providing a holistic support framework designed to support an empower students to achieve their personal, professional and academic goals. The range of professional services offered include Student Welfare & Wellbeing, Career Readiness, Learning Access & Facilitation (Disability), Academic Performance and Communication & Language. The welfare team is staffed by four CORU registered social workers who function as the College student welfare officers. RCSI also engages a number of independent third-party services: the RCSI Counselling Service which comprises a panel of 23 registered counsellors; the Mercer's Medical Centre GP Service; the RCSI Acute Psychiatric support

service provided by external consultant psychiatrists. The CoMPPAS Student Assistance Programme provides 24hr/365-day access to resources out of hours and, where necessary, emergency face to face or telephonic counselling anywhere in Ireland or abroad. Spectrum Health, a recent addition, provides a global network of counselling services available 24/7 to both students and staff.

The Student Services Office delivers a range of non-academic supports and services which include the following: Accommodation, Financial Assistance, Gym & Fitness, Immigration & Visa Support, Induction & Orientation, Merchandising, Student Publications, Scholarship Supports, Sports Clubs & Societies, Student Events, Student Union, Visiting Students Supports.

RCSI provides a comprehensive undergraduate point of entry induction and orientation programme for all new students during the first 6 weeks of each semester of their first year at RCSI. An adapted programme is provided to graduate entry students in line with their prior experience of higher education. In addition, at registration, undergraduate students are assigned an Academic Mentor/Personal Tutor. As an international student community, a significant value is placed on intercultural competence and the celebration of RCSI's cultural diversity. This includes specific input on intercultural awareness and communication to all students, as well as completion of an online module in the first weeks on the programme. Cultural Diversity Month takes place annually in March; this student-led initiative is supported by the Student Services Office. Events include the Cultural Exhibition Fair, International Night and International Food Night where students have a unique opportunity to showcase the culture, food, music, dance, landscape, clothing, history and traditions from their home countries.

The RCSI learning experience, by virtue of the student profile, requires full integration between students of all cultural backgrounds across all learning activities. As part of the induction programme, the CoMPPAS team run a number of large-scale welcome lunches to assist in student socialisation. Additionally, a comprehensive Peer to Peer mentoring programme makes immediately available 'near peer' support for students new to Dublin and Ireland. In addition to learning from the experiences of peers, Student Services supports and delivers an extracurricular activity for new students. Introducing them to the broad range of Clubs and Societies; there are currently 30 Clubs and 52 societies. RCSI respects all religions and none; a non-denominational serenity room, gender-specific Islamic prayer rooms and an optional female-only gym are available on campus for students of all backgrounds who wish to avail of them. RCSI encourages international students to participate and integrate also through a range of activities both specially created within RCSI and those available nationally, e.g. [RCSI REACH](#); [RCSI International Citizenship Programme](#); [Student Ambassador Programme](#). Most recently RCSI became the first Chapter of the Gold Humanism Honours Society outside of North America, a significant achievement where students have the opportunity to apply to become a member. RCSI's International Citizenship award is a longitudinal programme which encourages students to reflect on and develop the skills, values and attitudes that they will need to work effectively in a culturally diverse healthcare environment. The programme leads to an award for those students who show an 'international outlook' through demonstration of personal development and learning from their interactions with others from diverse backgrounds during extra-curricular activities.

RCSI is dedicated to enhancing the communication skills all of its international learners including its non-native speaking student population. The educational approach taken, due to our diverse student body & their needs, is best achieved through holistic and embedded means with some additional learning facilities provided where required. This is achieved through a variety of avenues both inside the curriculum and as a co-curricular or as additional learning provision where required. Communication skills development for the international student body is now also provided for, through a learning tool in a self-access format, in a dedicated communication and language lab space in our library building. Ongoing development and management of technology-based, language and communication resources and laboratory learning environments is achieved through guidance from our dedicated Lecturer in Communications who guides the use of this space. The University's dedicated communication and language self-access learning centre can be used only by those learners who are referred to it under advice from both the CoMPPAS team working in consultation with the lecturer in Communications. This

language learning self-access laboratory is housed at No 26 York Street for any international learners who may have additional language learning needs. This is both a physical and virtual space which provides flexible language learning tools and a dedicated learning space for non-native speaking students of RCSI. RCSI CoMPPAS is the service through which learners wishing to access the language self-access learning facilities can be initially identified and directed.

RCSI's international students are fully active in terms of formal student leadership and representative roles within university structures. This is clearly reflected in the diversity of the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students' Union teams and other representative & consultative bodies. Class Representative and Students' Union positions are open to all students, and international students are well represented at this level. In 2018, RCSI appointed a Deputy Dean for Student Engagement to build on the successful initiatives to date. This role was identified in the RCSI Strategic Plan 2018-22. [Student Engagement and Partnership \(StEP\)](#) is at the core of providing a distinctive and transformational educational experience that sets students up for career success at RCSI. Full engagement includes contributing to the development and evaluation of curricula, and to all aspects of educational, social and institutional decision-making. These StEP initiatives will define and drive student engagement across all campus activities and touch points in the student journey, fostering a culture of genuine student engagement pride in RCSI. So far this has resulted in a new partnership agreement and the funding of a 'Navigate to Graduate' student guide. The Postgraduate Students' Union has an international officer to ensure that RCSI is always aware of international scholar's needs.

RCSI places a particular emphasis on the provision of supports to students registered to online learning programmes at the University. These programmes are delivered by a number of postgraduate schools within the University via the [RCSI Online](#) platform and service. Students have access to high quality digitally developed programmes through a tailored virtual learning environment, designed to facilitate a seamless and intuitive student journey, ensuring maximum engagement and the establishment of a learning community regardless of location. The University's online programmes consist of both asynchronous and synchronous content supporting a self-paced and flexible educational experience. Student orientation is crucial to the onboarding process for these programmes, and the orientation programme is designed to prepare students for their learning journey and to ensure a quality and engaged student experience. Technical support is provided to learners to guide them, no matter their level of technical ability. The onboarding process ensures that students can understand the context and requirements of the programme, can access the virtual learning environment and virtual classrooms and have completed all necessary exercises to ensure a smooth experience. Students are guided through the initial access and use of the software required to engage with the programme. Regular facilitated Virtual Drop-In Sessions are scheduled for both students and adjunct faculty to encourage them to visit the virtual classrooms and to test accessibility and audio settings in advance of teaching sessions, and technical support is provided on an ongoing basis. From the outset, students have access to the programme schedule and are informed in a timely manner of any changes that need to be made. They are also made aware of the key contacts and persons available to them during their academic journey including the Programme Director, Module Leaders and Programme Coordinator and of the areas and issues with which these individuals can provide assistance and support.

4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes

The RCSI School of Postgraduate Studies (SPGS) manages all research programmes leading to higher degree awards. The SPGS Committee is responsible for overall governance and management of the School. The Taught Postgraduate Programme Management Committee, which has responsibility for policy oversight and engagement with the academic directors of all taught postgraduate programmes in RCSI, and the Academic Review Committee (ARC), which reviews all new applications for research degrees and ensures efficient and timely registration of new students with quality research proposals, both report to the SPGS Committee.

All policies & procedures in relation to programmes of research leading to postgraduate degree awards of RCSI (at Level 9 & 10 of the National Framework of Qualifications) are mapped to the National Framework for Doctoral Education (2015) and to Ireland's Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes. Both the published RCSI Academic Regulations for Research Degrees and the on-line application process for research degrees emphasise the centrality of deep engagement with a question, problem or hypothesis at the frontier of knowledge, and advancement of this frontier under the guidance of expert and committed supervision. In addition, they specify the NFQ Level 9 & 10 Descriptors for higher degrees by research.

RCSI research postgraduate degree programmes [MSc, MCh, MD & PhD] are structured programmes. Thus, while each research group will teach their students the specific research skills required for their bespoke projects, this is underpinned by an array of compulsory core modules. For example, Research Ethics & Integrity, Research Methodology, Time Management, Project Management, Critical Analysis, Writing & Communication Skills, and Biostatistics (including data collection, management and analysis). Doctoral students on Centre-driven PhD programmes (e.g. SPHeRE & FutureNeuro) undertake defined, topic specific core modules in Year 1 in parallel with a rigorous thesis definition and fine-tuning exercise during their first year. In some Programmatic PhDs (e.g., SPHeRE), a full suite of programmes is provided to replace the generic set of core modules.

The SPGS also provides an annual Induction Day that provides research students with information about available supports and resources, including Nature Masterclasses, Vitae Resources and LinkedIn Learning.

The SPGS implements a rigorous end-to-end process to guide each research student from initial application through to the final examination of their work for award of their degree.

- All student applications for research awards undergo rigorous review. Students are interviewed by the project supervisors and complete a Project Proposal form that is scrutinised by the Academic Review Committee. Peer reviewed projects are checked for candidate eligibility; evidence of statistical support during experimental design; evidence for research ethics application status and to ensure there are sufficient and appropriate resources to support successful completion of the project. Non-peer-reviewed or privately funded proposals are assessed in the same manner but additionally for the quality of the project proposal (general content, expected time required for completion, student support, probability of achieving publication standard). In the case of applicants for the RCSI Strategic Academic Recruitment Programme (StAR) MD and PhD programmes, applicants are interviewed also by a panel of academics selected by the SPGS.
- As noted previously, students must complete core modules to ensure they have the appropriate skills to complete their projects; they also have access to optional modules that can provide them with the skills that their particular project may require.
- Each project has a Supervisory Team made up of at least two supervisors who manage the student and the project. Students must meet a member of their Supervisory team at least once a month. Some programmes (e.g., MD) require specific 'milestone' meetings, which are sessions where all the students at the same stage on a programme present their work to each other and to their supervisors. The students are assessed through public questioning by a panel of experts across a range of specialties and they are given formal feedback. Supervisory teams are often interdisciplinary; for example, in the Intercalated MSc in Translational Research the team is made up of a clinical and a scientific supervisor.

- Each student undergoes an annual review of their progress, carried out by two academics who are independent of the core supervisory team. The process takes the form of a mini *viva*. In advance of the mini *viva* the student writes a substantial report on progress in their research project. During the *viva* the student presents a brief summary of their work followed by questions from the review panel on various aspects of their project and future plans. Following the mini *viva*, the reviewers submit a brief report on the project and the progress of the student. Reviewers are asked to come to a unanimous decision regarding the progression of the student to the next academic session, with three available outcomes: 'Progress', 'Do not progress – repeat review in six months' or 'Do not progress – exit'. Both students and supervisors have access to the report. An appeal process is available to students who receive an unfavourable decision from the reviewers. The annual review process was evaluated following student survey feedback and follow-up focus groups in 2021, resulting in changes to the annual report to reflect a greater focus on goals-driven professional development and training.
- In the event of conflict between a research student and their supervisor, students are encouraged to contact the SPGS for help or support, and a formal process can be undertaken as detailed in the internal Conflict Resolution Policy.
- At least six months in advance of submitting their thesis, all students are required to submit a Thesis Completion Plan, outlining their goals and timelines for completing their projects. For StAR MD candidates, the Thesis Completion Plan is presented and defended in an open forum after 18 months of research.
- All students are encouraged to present their work in institution-wide fora to build their academic presentation skills; for example, the annual RCSI Research Day and the annual 'Thesis-in-3 event' where students have to describe their research in three minutes. In addition to these institutional level events, all students are encouraged to present their work to their own research groups on a weekly and monthly basis. Students are also encouraged to present at national and international conferences, networking events and workshops within their chosen field of research. Funding for these is provided by RCSI StAR Programmes or individual project grants.
- For the final assessment of a thesis submission, the requirement for the work to be of publishable standard, and to demonstrate an ability to conduct original research and to test a hypothesis, is emphasised in the RCSI Academic Regulations for Research Degrees. Level 10 awards (MD & PhD) are examined in a *Viva Voce* examination format whereby the student must be able to demonstrate the originality of their research to the examiners. Students and supervisors are required to nominate examiners who are experts in the field of study, who are actively publishing in the field and who have previous experience of thesis examination.
- For all research degree awards, examiners are provided with a thesis report template which specifically asks examiners to answer the question: 'Is the thesis an original work that makes a significant contribution to knowledge or understanding in the field of study?' For theses presented through the 'Thesis by Publication' route (see below), the originality of the work is attested by the peer-review process that the individual publications were subject to.

The SPGS employs a number of measures to ensure that thesis submissions, irrespective of format, are held to a consistent standard across disciplines. Each January, students in their final year are invited to attend a thesis completion workshop which explains how they should present their thesis and the examination process; it also outlines where students can find further support for writing their thesis – this includes access to Vitae resources and to Nature Masterclasses. Students are also directed to the RCSI Repository, which holds examples of previously submitted theses. A Thesis Presentation Guidelines document also outlines what the thesis should include and how it should be presented. Additionally, thesis examiners are asked to comment on whether the examined thesis is in line with the standards of theses that are submitted in their home university and in other universities in which they have examined.

The University has introduced PhD-by-Prior-Publication and MD-by-Prior-Publication submission routes which offer the opportunity to complete a level 10 award to those with a record of publications in biomedical, clinical,

surgical and health services research. This route allows scholars who have sufficient research experience at doctoral level, as demonstrated through previously published material, to gain academic recognition for their work over a minimum registration period of one year. Researchers who have published their own original research, which examiners deem has made a significant contribution to knowledge, can obtain a PhD or MD award in recognition of this work when it is presented in the form of a coherent thesis and successfully assessed in a *viva voce* examination. To be eligible to submit for a PhD-by-Prior-Publication, the candidate must have published a minimum of five original research papers in journals ranked Q1 in their relevant fields in the ten years prior to the date of application for admission, and be senior author (first or last author) on all five research papers. To be eligible to submit for an MD-by-Prior-Publication, the candidate must have published a minimum of three original research papers in journals ranked Q1 or Q2 in their relevant fields in the ten years prior to the date of application for admission, and be senior author (first or last author) on all three date-based papers.

The SPGS emphasises the broader need for personal and professional development of postgraduate students. All research students have access to the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF), as part of the core module 'Postgraduate Essentials (PC01)', which helps to identify their strengths and prioritise their own areas for development. Vitae RDF provides students with tools to identify and leverage opportunities for their own personal and professional development, and helps them to consider their career prospects and identify opportunities for career progression. The SPGS offers Internship and ERASMUS+ exchange programmes to enable students to avail of opportunities to travel to institutions overseas for work experience. Research students have the opportunity to contribute to RCSI undergraduate teaching programmes as laboratory demonstrators & tutors. Research students can volunteer to work in the local community through REACH – the University's community engagement and access programme – which works with second-level students from disadvantaged backgrounds to provide tutoring in science subjects. The SPGS is working currently with the RCSI careers team (RCSI CoMPPAS) to establish a Career Development Programme for Research Students.

Ensuring the quality of the research environment and of the supervision provided to postgraduate research students is a key activity of SPGS. The ARC reviews projects to ensure that there is supervisory capacity for projects, as well as the appropriate laboratory and other resources to ensure successful completion of the project. Supervisor Training is provided to new supervisors once a year, which outlines their responsibilities to the students they supervise and the supports available to supervisors. The RCSI Moodle Virtual Learning Environment has a dedicated area for resources for Supervisors, including a roadmap to onboard students, the set of relevant forms and policies that supervisors should be familiar with (including a Research Supervisor Charter), an online training course and guidelines on how to mentor students. RCSI also participates in the Research Supervisor Support & Development Programme (RSSDP), which is a series of workshops targeted at new, inexperienced research supervisors, and at more experienced staff who would like to refresh their knowledge on aspects of research supervisory practice. In 2020, the successful RSSDP collaboration between UCD, TCD and RCSI was extended to include the Karolinska Institute (Stockholm) and UNSW (Sydney, Australia) and in 2021 to include IUA Universities. Institutions offers specific workshops or online supports that are open to partner institutions. These collaborative workshops address key, generic research supervisor challenges. In relation to ethical oversight of research within the University, research ethics committees act to ensure the highest standards of conduct in research at RCSI. This is achieved [a] by evaluating ethical considerations of all research projects involving human or animal participants, and conducted by or through members of staff, which are not evaluated by other similar committees; and [b] by fulfilling an educational and advisory role regarding ethical aspects of research in order to promote best practice in research conducted throughout RCSI.

In order to monitor the quality of the student experience in research degree programmes, the SPGS avails of student satisfaction & engagement survey data generated by the QEO through regular internal surveys and through participation in external surveys such as StudentSurvey.ie, the national student survey. The quantitative and qualitative data from these surveys are communicated to the SPGS team who incorporate this feedback into the annual planning process. The 'voice' of postgraduate research students is heard also through their participation in the Postgraduate Students' Union (PGSU). The PGSU President is a member of the SPGS Committee and informal meetings take place fortnightly between the PGSU President & Vice-President and the

SPGS Manager & Head of School. The PGSU is represented also on the university-wide Student Engagement & Partnership (StEP) Committee.

The RCSI Awards and Qualifications Committee (A&QC) has responsibility, with authority delegated by MHSB, for the validation, revalidation and review of all programmes leading to degree awards of RCSI. As such it maintains oversight of all postgraduate programmes (taught and by research), considering new programme proposals and any changes required to existing programmes. A&QC also undertakes rolling Programmatic Reviews (as described above). Within SPGS, the PhD programme was reviewed in 2012 and the MD programme was reviewed in 2018. The Quality Enhancement Office (QEO) also carries out reviews of Schools, Faculties and Professional Services Units within RCSI. The School of Postgraduate Studies was reviewed most recently in 2016. RCSI is a member of the European Universities Association (EUA) and staff participate in conferences and events run by EUA. The SPGS is a member of the UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE) and staff members regularly attend UKCGE training events and conferences.

RCSI is committed to carrying out research to the highest standards of professionalism and scientific rigour to ensure the accuracy and integrity of research outputs. The University's approach to research conduct and integrity aligns with the [European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#), which sets four fundamental principles that underpin all research integrity and good practice, and with [Ireland's Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes](#). These principles are central to the RCSI approach to [Research Governance](#). RCSI's institutional Academic Integrity Working Group includes the manager of the SPGS as a member. Examiner appointments for research awards are reviewed and signed-off by a number of bodies; firstly, by the SPGS Committee which then makes a recommendation for appointment of the examiner to Academic Council and to Medicine & Health Sciences Board and, ultimately, to the NUI. Students must sign and agree the Postgraduate Code of Research Conduct (which incorporates the [National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland](#)) and the [RCSI Statement on Research Integrity](#). All research students must complete a Research Ethics and Integrity module in their first year to ensure that they have a basic grounding in the concepts of research integrity. Students can also access the [Epigeum](#) Research Integrity online, self-directed course specifically developed for Irish researchers.

5.0 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support

Recruiting and developing our academic, research and professional staff is central to excellence in teaching, postgraduate training and research. RCSI seeks to recruit, retain and promote outstanding academic staff who enable our students and postgraduate trainees to reach their full potential. Academic appointments and promotions are based on objective criteria (education, research and societal contributions) and are competitive. The Human Resources function based at RCSI Dublin is responsible for all aspects of recruitment and subsequent human resource management across RCSI's campus network in Ireland and overseas. The [Careers at RCSI](#) web-pages offer an overview of RCSI as an international employer, including recruitment policies and FAQs.

Staff recruitment follows a well-defined process (with minor variations depending on the grade of post being filled) which is supported at all stages by HR. For senior academic roles, the process is as follows:

- **Role planning:** Upcoming roles are identified through retirement tracking, annual departmental business planning and workforce planning. These are largely highly specialised roles, where RCSI requires the ability to attract candidates nationally and internationally with the academic, research and leadership expertise required. The development of a candidate pool should commence a number of years in advance. This pipeline/pool development process will be guided by an Academic Search Committee (ASC).
- **Recruitment approach:** The ASC will make decisions on advertising channels (newspapers, journals, websites etc.); sourcing channels (conferences etc.); use of an external search agency and whether support from the in-house International Talent Specialist is needed. The recruitment team will then meet with the most relevant internal stakeholders to identify details of the appropriate channels to advertise and market the posts.
- **Shortlisting:** The Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (DVCAA) leads the shortlisting process for Professors and Associate Professors but may delegate this responsibility to the nominated Chair, or hiring lead, for Associate Professors or Academic Clinicians below Head of Department level and for other roles. Equally, if the DVCAA cannot sit on a panel, they will nominate a suitable replacement. All members of the interview panel must be invited to participate in the shortlisting process to [a] ensure that fair and transparent decisions are reached, and [b] establish a number of quality candidates. In the absence of all members of the interview panel being available to participate in the shortlisting process, then, at a minimum, the Head of School and Head of Discipline, must be involved in the shortlisting process. The most highly ranked candidates are called for interview and the number called for interview should ideally reflect an applicant to appointment ratio of 5:1 (e.g., average of five candidates per position), for reasons of fairness and equity. Gender balance and diversity of applicants called for interview should also form part of the consideration.
- **Interviews:** For Head of Department roles, RCSI requires a two-stage process - a pre-interview visit and a formal interview. There is a requirement for the interview panel to be gender balanced and have someone with appropriate external expertise. Some posts may have a minimum requirement for four panel members – all with academic members as the majority. Additionally, time will be scheduled at the end of the interviews for the panel to discuss each candidate in detail and provide objective scoring. During this time, the panel should come to a mutual agreement on the outcome of the interviews. All interview notes and scoresheets will be collected by the HR Representative on the panel.
- **Reference checks & Offers:** Two references are required from the agreed candidate before an offer is made. The referees must be people that the candidate reported into, be relevant to the role that is being recruited for and be as current as possible. A recruitment representative will contact the candidate to let them know that their references will be checked, and this will be completed by recruitment or another nominee. Details of the new employee's qualifications are stored on the Core HR system. When a new employee commences with RCSI, their education details are input to Core HR by the HR team from details provided in their application and updated as necessary throughout their careers with RCSI. The parameters of the offer are agreed between the relevant Senior Management Team (SMT) member

and the Director of HR. Offers are made by the HR Director or a member of the HR team, who also handles any contract negotiations.

- **‘Onboarding’ process:** RCSI recognises the importance of ensuring that successful candidates are welcomed into RCSI and given every support and assistance to help them settle into their new role. For senior positions, this process often begins before the successful candidate is formally in post. An induction and on-boarding plan is developed with HR and the Head of Department to guide the process.

RCSI prioritises staff development in line with its overall philosophy of life-long learning. RCSI supports staff to participate in the Postgraduate Diploma in Health Professions Education offered by the Health Professions Education Centre. HPEC also offers a range of other educational inputs for staff including those set out in Section 2.4.

In parallel, through the annual Staff Development Scheme, RCSI offers a number of subsidised places to staff on a range of Level 8 and 9 programmes run by the Graduate School of Healthcare Management and other academic schools. Through this scheme staff, can also apply for funding support to pursue doctoral studies in RCSI and academic qualifications in other HEIs. A wide range of developmental supports are offered through the Staff Learning and Development function within the HR team. These include short courses and workshops, leadership development programmes, bespoke team development sessions and 1:1 coaching and mentoring opportunities. These are advertised to all staff through the internal social media platform, Workvivo, and through the staff portal and internal mailing lists. On an annual basis, all staff are required to complete an online training refresh on General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), Cyber Security Awareness and Unconscious Bias, with a compliance rate of 100%, during the reporting period. Optional online courses also include Health and Safety awareness and Handling Disclosures of Unwanted Sexual Incidents. HR also provides a campus wide licence for the online training library of LinkedIn Learning providing access to thousands of high-quality video-based training courses on a range of professional and technical skills. A licence for Nature Masterclasses gives our Researchers access to training on key skills covering the whole research lifecycle.

In terms of assuring/enhancing teaching quality, the RCSI Policy and Guidelines for Academic Promotion evaluate applicants under the category of Education as well as Research and Service. The Education contribution covers all aspects of the candidate’s activities relating to teaching, learning and assessment over the previous five-year period (or the period since the candidate was last promoted, whichever is shorter). A qualification in education is increasingly needed to be competitive at academic promotion rounds. Most staff members are involved also in the annual Professional Development Planning (PDP) process (which compliments the Academic Promotions Process) through which they identify their goals and development needs for the coming year. Academic staff must outline their ‘Educational’ goals separately from their Research and Service goals. These goals are reviewed mid-year and then re-evaluated in conjunction with their line manager at the end of the year.

RCSI provides a wide range of opportunities for staff to teach, learn or conduct research at institutions that provide higher education outside the State, or to obtain relevant work experience outside the State. RCSI participates in national and international initiatives in this area including the International Credit Mobility Programme, Erasmus+, Fulbright and the Eisenhower Fellowship. RCSI runs a number of specific programmes including the staff Sabbatical Leave Scheme. All academic staff in the course of their work, are frequently invited to present at international conferences. Staff are also widely engaged in international committees and organisations (e.g., editorial boards of international journals) in their areas of expertise. Funding is made available to facilitate participation in international conferences.

RCSI also provides opportunities for staff of institutions that provide higher education outside the State to teach, learn or conduct research in RCSI. RCSI’s exclusive focus on healthcare education and research and our relatively small size provides a fertile opportunity for collaboration and engagement. Visiting academics contribute to intellectual activity in RCSI, expand opportunities for networking, build relationships internationally and stimulate further engagement such as joint research work, publications and reciprocal visits. Options for such

staff include: Educator in Residence, Erasmus+, Fulbright Scholar, Adjunct and Visiting Academic Staff Scheme, Visiting Scientist Scheme and appointments as External Examiners on postgraduate programmes.

RCSI, through the Human Resources Department, provides a wide range of general development, pastoral care and welfare services to staff including health & wellbeing resources, supports for parents & carers and pension & retirement benefits. All staff and students can avail of service including counselling and support from an external provider Spectrum Health. In addition, the INSPIRE programme aims to promote health and wellbeing. RCSI is a recipient of the Ibec KeepWell mark in recognition of this work. In 2022, at the annual KeepWell awards, RCSI were awarded Best in Class: Mental Health.

6.0 Information and Data Management

RCSI operates a number of processes for collecting, analysing and using information about programmes and other activities for quality assurance purposes. Quality Assurance processes are informed by a number of information sources which include: institutional metrics, student population profile, student feedback, student progression rates, HEA return data, alumni career paths and information related to student support.

Institutional Metrics are an essential information stream that contribute to quality assurance processes, business planning and to the monitoring of implementation of institutional strategy. Data that feeds into institutional KPIs is gathered annually by the Vice Chancellors Office, including in the following areas: transformative learning experience, leading impactful research, supporting healthcare and society and people and culture. These are monitored routinely by the Senior Management Team and shared with the key departments within RCSI. The Insights & Planning Office (IPO), established in 2020, helps to develop RCSI's business intelligence and management information and reporting capability. IPO provides frequent bibliometric analysis including benchmarking and analysis and insights on the international higher education landscape.

Profile of student population:

RCSI routinely collects information about the student population through the Student, Academic & Regulatory Affairs Office.

Student Feedback:

As set out in section 2.4, the QEO manages the collection, analysis and dissemination of student feedback in RCSI. Undergraduate and taught postgraduate students in Dublin, Bahrain, and Malaysia are given an opportunity to give feedback about modules completed in each semester while research scholars complete a scholar experience survey, introduced in 2021-22. All student surveys contain a series of core items relating to the headings of Modules, Assessments, Skills & Staff. Surveys are developed in collaboration with Cycle Directors and other faculty staff who have an opportunity to suggest additional survey items if required. The Students' Union participates in survey promotion. The QEO conducts an in-depth analysis of both quantitative and qualitative feedback with an aim to inform and enhance the delivery of RCSI programmes. Detailed reports that contain both quantitative and qualitative survey responses are circulated to Programme & Cycle Directors who can share the findings with their teaching staff. This gives module coordinators and facilitators an opportunity to identify areas for improvement. In order to close the feedback loop, quantitative reports (without open-ended comments) are routinely made available to students via the Moodle virtual learning environment, and schools are encouraged to present their quality improvement plans based on this feedback to their students. In 2020-21, the University introduced a new feedback mechanism, the "Student Pulse Poll", to capture feedback on a more frequent basis in response to the rapid changes in student experience due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This consisted of a short, 4-question survey conducted monthly to track changes in student experience. Following a review in 2021-22, the frequency has been decreased to two Pulse surveys in each semester, complemented by a longer end of Semester survey.

Student progression rates:

Student progression rates are an important indicator of academic quality. Progression rates and graduate numbers for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes are reported annually by the RCSI Registry part of Student, Academic & Regulatory Affairs (SARA) office as part of the suite of RCSI internal key performance indicators reports.

Student Engagement Dashboard:

Software designed by the RCSI IT Department has been implemented which reflects student involvement and interaction with their course material in Moodle in real time. The software allows students to compare their engagement in Moodle to the average level of class engagement, and provides an early detection alert to staff when students are not engaging.

HEA returns:

Under the current legislation RCSI is required to collect data for the HEA Annual Statistical Return. This process is managed by the Student, Academic & Regulatory Affairs (SARA) Office.

Career paths of graduates:

Although, as a not-for-profit organisation, RCSI is not required to collect information for the HEA First Destination report, the University has a process for tracking students' career paths. Upon graduation, students become part of RCSI's alumni community of 28,000+ in 98 countries worldwide. The relationships with alumni are managed by a dedicated Alumni Team who collect and manage information about graduates in the Alumni Database. This includes information such as employment data e.g., workplace and area of practice. On an annual basis the team conducts a 'census' to capture the number of alumni, location of contactable alumni and level of employment data. In addition, the team participates in the annual Alumni Engagement Metrics survey, which is conducted by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education. This survey records alumni engagement across events, communications, volunteering, and philanthropy. It allows the team to benchmark engagement levels against a total of 365 institutions in 19 countries (2021). During the reporting period, the Alumni Team also piloted an Alumni Volunteer Programme. Alumni were invited to register an interest in several roles including: guest speaking; content creation; student mentoring; (alumni) event organisation and contributing to publications. A total of 366 alumni volunteers were recorded for the academic year 2021 – 2022.

Learning Resources and student support available:

RCSI aims to support students by offering relevant information through the Student Services Office, CoMPPAS & other offices. A wide range of services is offered including accommodation, access & disability, clubs & societies, counselling, health information etc. The services delivered by these units are guided by policies, procedures, rules, regulations, guidelines and formal documentation. These are designed and developed using a combination of information sources and resources including students, staff, other colleges and universities, best practice guidelines, legislative requirements, the College's legal experts and external stakeholders. A wide range of learning resources are delivered to students via the Moodle virtual learning environment and the RCSI Libraries.

Data Protection: RCSI operates in line with the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. RCSI's Privacy Policy is published on the public [website](#) and the following Data Protection Policies are available on the staff portal:

- Data Privacy Statement
- Data Subject Rights Policy
- Data Breach Policy (Updated September 2021)
- Data Processors Policy
- Data Sharing Checklist
- RCSI Data Retention Policy
- Clean Desk Policy (Updated Sept. 2018)
- Privacy By Design Policy

Annual Data Protection Training is a mandatory requirement among RCSI Staff.

Information on freedom of information (FOI) is also published on the [website](#); this includes detailed information on the [FOI process](#) at RCSI.

7.0 Public Information and Communication

Publication of Quality Assurance documents:

RCSI is committed to robust, transparent processes and procedures for ongoing quality assurance and quality enhancement of academic programmes, Schools, Faculties and Professional Support Units both in Ireland and overseas. In keeping with this, RCSI publishes Peer Review Group reports and Quality Improvement Plans arising from internal quality reviews. Additional Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement (QA/QI) documentation including internal review guidelines and templates for academic and professional support units, guidelines and report templates for peer review groups and guidelines and templates for quality improvement plans are also available on the website. Furthermore, the RCSI Quality Framework and Calendar of Reviews are published online.

Learner information:

The RCSI website is the primary source of information for prospective students on all programmes and awards. On the “[Study with us](#)” pages on the RCSI website, learners can find details of programmes available at undergraduate and postgraduate level and of higher degrees by research. Information is tailored for either undergraduate or postgraduate learners and includes various entry routes, programme award, NFQ level, programme structure, entry requirements, fees, programme content, student testimonials and application processes. Learners can also find information on access, scholarships, open days, and much more. The University also has an extensive communications programme in place to keep prospective learners up-to-date on news and developments regarding the academic and social experiences of current students. Other sources of information for prospective learners include CRM emails, school guidance counsellors, RCSI prospectuses, social media activities (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn and TikTok), external education and careers portals, and overseas agents’ websites.

Public Information:

RCSI’s institutional communications strategy is aimed at building the university’s reputation for education and research excellence and deepening understanding of its mission, strengths and achievements among key stakeholders. The university actively communicates through its website and across each of the main social media channels. Social engagement is a key pillar in the communications strategy and is particularly relevant in RCSI’s efforts to build greater global awareness of its education and research strengths. RCSI participates in several annual community engagement initiatives such as National Heritage Week, Culture Night, and Open House.

8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review

RCSI implements several internal processes for self-evaluation and monitoring, these include Internal Quality Reviews, Programmatic Reviews and Programme Monitoring.

Internal Quality Assurance Reviews:

The Quality Enhancement Office operates a system of rolling Internal Quality Reviews under policies and procedures which are aligned with guidance from Quality & Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. These reviews run in four parallel cycles:

- Internal Quality Assurance Reviews of Schools within the University of Medicine & Health Sciences;
- Internal QA Reviews of Postgraduate/Professional Faculties;
- Internal QA Reviews of Professional Support Units;
- Internal QA Reviews of overseas Branch Campuses.

Additionally, the QEO administers thematic and bespoke reviews as directed by the Quality Committee, MHSB and SPFB. In common with similar processes in the Irish higher education sector, these reviews consist of three phases: self-assessment and the production of a Self-Assessment Report by the unit under review, validation of the self-assessment by a Peer Review Group which undertakes a 2–3-day site-visit and produces a Peer Review Group Report and, finally, the production and implementation of a Quality Improvement Plan by the unit. Peer Review Group Reports and their corresponding Quality Improvement Plans are published by RCSI.

Programmatic Reviews:

All matters related to Programmatic Reviews in RCSI are managed by the Awards and Qualification Committee (A&QC). The A&QC oversees a rolling cycle of Programmatic Reviews of all RCSI programmes which offer qualifications or awards on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and which fall under the governance of the Medicine and Health Science Board. Programmatic Reviews follow a process consisting of the following steps: preparation of a Self-evaluation Report, submission of a Business Case Report to the Business Case Panel, a two-day site-visit facilitated by a three-person review panel (two external and one internal members), submission of a review report, and presentation of the report to the Medicine & Health Science Board. As noted above, the report produced by the review panel provides affirmation of positive aspects of the programme and offers recommendations for quality improvement. Programmatic Review panels are empowered to recommend a period of with quality improvement planning with follow-up or, in extremis, to recommend discontinuation of a degree programme.

Programme Monitoring:

RCSI overseas campuses submit programme monitoring forms to the Quality Enhancement Office in respect of the educational programmes that they deliver. The Quality Enhancement Office plans to develop a centralised repository for programme monitoring information.

Input from External Examiners:

The RCSI Medicine & Health Science Board nominates External Examiners for all educational programmes leading to degree awards, who are then appointed by the National University of Ireland. These examiners report annually to the NUI (and thence to RCSI) on their evaluation of programme delivery and assessment, student performance, etc.

Use of metrics:

In order to support the self-evaluation and monitoring processes RCSI routinely collects and generates statistical data for monitoring and self-evaluation. Examination results are produced by a data analyst in the Registry and monitored by Examination Boards to monitor student performance and to ensure the accuracy and integrity of

the examination process. RCSI also collects and analyses institutional metrics aligned with our strategic objectives.

RCSI Risk Register:

In order to mitigate the risk factors which may have an impact on students and/or the institution, RCSI maintains a Risk Register and associated Risk Status Sheets which identify, score and evaluate a number of risk factors. The Audit and Risk Committee conducts a quarterly review of the Risk Register and associated Risk Status Sheets, including a review of emerging risks. The following aspects are considered for each risk factor: the consequence of risk occurring, description of existing controls, effectiveness of controls, vulnerabilities/weaknesses that increase the exposure to the risk, and a detailed action plan to address key areas of weakness or vulnerability. Responsibility for individual risk factors is assigned to owners at Senior Management Team level. The Risk Register is reviewed at Council annually.

9.0 Details of Arrangements with Third Parties

9.1 Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

Type of arrangement	Total Number
PRSBs	5
Awarding bodies	1
QA bodies	4

1. Type of arrangement	Awarding body
Name of body:	National University of Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	RCSI degree awarding powers (enacted in 2010) were recognised in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, and RCSI was identified as a 'Designated Awarding Body'. Schedule 3 (9) of the Qualifications & Quality Assurance (Education & Training) Act 2012 introduced Section 47A to the Universities Act 1997 which provides that the degrees & qualifications of RCSI shall be degrees & qualifications of the NUI where they are approved by the NUI and while RCSI remains a recognized college of the NUI. Accordingly, degree awards of RCSI are awards of the NUI. Please note the "date of accreditation" does not apply in this context - for further information see http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce_docs/QA_Relationship_NUI_RCSI.pdf
Date of accreditation or last review	01/01/1900
Date of next review	

2. Type of arrangement	PRSB
Name of body:	Medical Council of Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelors Degrees in Medicine, Surgery & Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO] RCSI Dublin; RCSI Bahrain; Perdana University-RCSI School of Medicine; RCSI UCD Malaysia Campus https://www.medicalcouncil.ie/education/career-stage-undergraduate/quality-assurance/medical-school-accreditation/accreditation-reports/medical-school-reports-2020.html Dates of last review: 04-06 Mar. 2019 (Dublin);

	23 - 24 Mar. 2021 (Virtual Review) accreditation for five years from 17 November 2021 with a confirmatory site-visit scheduled to take place on 24-25 Oct. 2022 (Bahrain); 24 -25 Jan. 2018 (Perdana); 29-30 Jan. 2019 (RUMC) Dates of next review: 2024 (Dublin); 2026 (Bahrain); 2022 (Perdana); 2024 (RUMC)
Date of accreditation or last review	17/11/2021
Date of next review	

3. Type of arrangement	PRSB
Name of body:	Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	Masters Degree in Pharmacy (M. Pharm) https://www.thepsi.ie/Libraries/Education/RCSI_Accreditation_Report_2020.sflb.aspx Date of accreditation or last review 02-06 March 2020 Date of next review 2025
Date of accreditation or last review	06/03/2020
Date of next review	

4. Type of arrangement	PRSB
Name of body:	Health & Social Care Professionals Council (CORU) Physiotherapists Registration Board
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelors Degree in Physiotherapy Site-visit 23-24 June 2021. Approval granted 28 September 2021 Date of next review 2026
Date of accreditation or last review	28/09/2021
Date of next review	

5. Type of arrangement	PRSB
Name of body:	Nursing & Midwifery Board of Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	A portfolio of Postgraduate Certificate, Postgraduate Diploma, BSc & MSc programmes as listed in the Irish

	Register of Qualifications [irq.ie] Rolling five-year accreditation cycles - as such the date of accreditation is not provided in this context.
Date of accreditation or last review	01/01/1900
Date of next review	

6. Type of arrangement	PRSB
Name of body:	Malaysian Medical Council
Programme titles and links to publications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perdana University-RCSI School of Medicine (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia); Bachelors Degrees in Medicine, Surgery & Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO] • RCSI-UCD Malaysia Campus (Penang, Malaysia) - formerly Penang Medical College; Bachelors Degrees in Medicine, Surgery & Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO] Date of accreditation or last review: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perdana University-RCSI: 8 & 9 Jun. 2022. Awaiting final report • RCSI-UCD Malaysia Campus: Sept. 2018 Date of next review: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perdana University-RCSI: Not applicable. The final PURCSI class will graduate in 2024. • RCSI-UCD Malaysia Campus: (date TBC)
Date of accreditation or last review	09/06/2022
Date of next review	

7. Type of arrangement	QA body
Name of body:	Quality & Qualifications Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	Internal QA policies & procedures; all programmes of higher education and professional training
Date of accreditation or last review	21/10/2013
Date of next review	09/10/2023

8. Type of arrangement	QA body
Name of body:	Education & Training Quality Authority, Kingdom of Bahrain
Programme titles and links to publications	Internal QA policies & procedures; all programmes of higher education and professional training; institutional listing and placement and alignment of programmes to the Bahrain Qualifications Framework (NQF) Date of accreditation or last review: 2018 Institutional Accreditation 4-7 Apr. 2021 programmatic review (virtual

	review) of BSc Nursing and MSc Nursing. Date of accreditation and placement and revalidation on the NQF: Mar. 2022; 6-10 Mar. 2022 programmatic review of Bachelors Degrees in Medicine, Surgery and Obstetrics (MB, BCh, BAO). Date of accreditation: Jul. 2022. Date of next review: 2023 Institutional Review (tentative) 2027 Programmatic Reviews (tentative)
Date of accreditation or last review	25/07/2022
Date of next review	

9. Type of arrangement	QA body
Name of body:	Higher Education Council, Kingdom of Bahrain
Programme titles and links to publications	Internal QA policies & procedures; all programmes of higher education and professional training; Institutional listing. Institutional Accreditation Visit 8-11th April 2018. Certificate granted 24th Feb 2019 Date of next review: 2024
Date of accreditation or last review	11/04/2018
Date of next review	

10. Type of arrangement	QA body
Name of body:	Malaysian Qualifications Agency (parallel QA processes with Malaysian Medical Council)
Programme titles and links to publications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perdana University-RCSI School of Medicine (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia); Bachelors Degrees in Medicine, Surgery & Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO] • RCSI-UCD Malaysia Campus (Penang, Malaysia) - formerly Penang Medical College; Bachelors Degrees in Medicine, Surgery & Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO] Date of accreditation or last review: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perdana University-RCSI: 8 & 9 Jun. 2022. Awaiting final report. • RCSI-UCD Malaysia Campus: Oct. 2018 Date of next review: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perdana University-RCSI: Not applicable. The final PURCSI class will graduate in 2024. • RCSI-UCD Malaysia Campus: (date TBC)
Date of accreditation or last review	10/10/2018
Date of next review	

9.2 Collaborative Provision

Definitions:

QQI's Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes, and Joint Awards, 2012 defines collaborative provision as a process that occurs where two or more providers are involved by formal agreement in the provision of a programme of higher education and training.

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (as amended) defines 'joint award' as a single award made jointly by two or more awarding bodies

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (as amended) defines 'linked provider' as a provider that is not a designated awarding body but enters into an arrangement with a designated awarding body under which arrangement the provider provides a programme of education and training that satisfies all or part of the prerequisites for an award of the designated awarding body.

Type of arrangement	Total Number
Joint research degrees	0
Joint/double/multiple awards	1
Collaborative programmes	2
Franchise programmes	1
Linked providers (DABs only)	0

1. Collaborative provision	Franchise programme
Name of body (/bodies):	Perdana University - RCSI School of Medicine (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelors Degrees in Medicine, Surgery & Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO] The programme is currently in a teach-out phase with two remaining cohorts to graduate in 2023 and 2024
Date of last review	19/10/2015
Date of next review	

2. Collaborative provision	Collaborative programme
Name of body (/bodies):	RCSI-UCD Malaysia Campus (Penang, Malaysia)
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelors Degrees in Medicine, Surgery & Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO] Date of next review 2023
Date of last review	02/05/2014
Date of next review	

3. Collaborative provision	Collaborative programme
Name of body (/bodies):	Munster Technological University (formerly Institute of Technology Tralee)
Programme titles and links to publications	NUI Certificate in Biomedical Sciences
Date of last review	01/04/2012
Date of next review	

4. Collaborative provision	Joint/double/multiple award
Name of body (/bodies):	Soochow University (China)
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelors Degree in Clinical Pharmacy (International) - RCSI/NUI; Bachelors degree in Pharmacy - Soochow University [Dual Degree programme] Date of last review: 29/08/2018 - Date provided is date of agreement
Date of last review	29/08/2018
Date of next review	

9.3 Articulation Agreements

Definition:

Per the IHEQN Guidelines for the Approval, Monitoring and Review of Collaborative and Transnational Provision, an articulation agreement may be defined as a process whereby all students who satisfy academic criteria on one programme are automatically entitled (on academic grounds) to be admitted with advance standing to a subsequent stage of a programme of a degree awarding body. These arrangements are subject to a formal agreement between the parties.

Articulation agreements - Total number	1
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1. Articulation agreement	Articulation agreement
Name of body (/bodies):	Soochow University (Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, China)
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelors Degree in Clinical Pharmacy (International) - RCSI/NUI; Bachelors degree in Pharmacy - Soochow University [Dual Degree programme]
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	29/08/2018
Date of next review	
Detail of the agreement	The Transnational Collaboration Agreement between the partner universities was signed on 29 August 2018. The articulation agreement provides for students entering the Soochow University (SU) Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy degree programme and, having met the stated requirements by the end of the second year of the programme, transferring to RCSI where they will complete Years 3 & 4 of the Integrated Masters Degree in Pharmacy (M. Pharm.). Students successfully completing the four years of study will graduate with the SU BSc in Pharmacy and the RCSI/NUI BSc in Clinical Pharmacy (International). In order to prepare potential students for the transition from SU to RCSI, the curriculum incorporates modules in Years 1 & 2 of the SU programme delivered in Soochow by visiting RCSI staff.

[Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland]

2023

Annual Quality Report (RCSI)
PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE
ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT
Reporting Period 2021-2022

PART B: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Guidelines on Completing Part B

As outlined in the general guidelines for this template (p.6), **Part B** of the AQR focuses specifically on the effectiveness and impact of the IQA framework on the QA activities and developments across the institution during the reporting period.

Here, the institution is invited to document the quality enhancements adopted and implemented during the reporting period and describe concisely the impact of these across a selected range of activities. Part B should also be used to demonstrate how plans set out in the previous AQR were progressed during the reporting period. These plans may be linked to strategic objectives, to QQI reengagement advices, or to Cinnte review recommendations.

Part B of the AQR is an opportunity for self-reflection and critical evaluation of the effectiveness of QA activities over the reporting period. The institution is encouraged to reflect on what worked well and what did not, and to consider impact measures, using both quantitative and qualitative evidence (metrics, benchmarks and feedback/judgement) and detail how they led to specific improvements of and enhancement in QA activities.

Part B provides evidence of quality improvement and enhancement and impact² of QA activities within the totality of the institution's QA system.

Section 1 pertains to internal quality assurance implementation and developments since the previous reporting period.

Section 2 considers the institutional analysis of IQA enhancements and their impact on a range of activities including academic integrity.

Section 3 relates to IQA developments and plans for the next reporting period.

Section 4 provides an opportunity for institutions to showcase IQA in action through case studies in relevant thematic areas.

Institutions are invited to use case studies to demonstrate quality in action and to highlight areas of practice for dissemination at any point in this part of the report.

Case Studies

QQI recommends that written case studies should:

- Be between half a page and two pages in length;
- Relate to a specific time- and subject-bound issue;
- Include an introduction that sets out a brief overview of contextual matters;
- Include any relevant supporting data and data analysis;
- Include links to any sources cited;
- Include a clear and concise concluding paragraph with an overview of the key outcomes/learning.

² The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education have considered impact and measures leading to development and improvement specifically in terms of teaching and learning. See: <https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/wp-content/uploads/NF-2020-Insights-from-Practice-About-Impact-in-Teaching-and-Learning-web-ready.pdf>. This is a very useful reference, though impact in the context of this report should be considered

Although case studies will generally be in written form, institutions may also provide links to audio-visual/multimedia case studies. QQI does not prescribe a format for case studies.

1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments

1.1 Strategic QA Updates

Strategic Updates

[RCSI's Strategic Plan 2018-2022](#) is built upon three foundations: quality, reputation, and equality, diversity & inclusion. As such, the University's work is driven by and built upon an unrelenting focus on quality. RCSI aims to develop and maintain a culture of quality in which responsibility for the quality of the student experience and for continuous enhancement is shared by all staff.

Following several years conceptual development, preparations progressed, during the reporting period for the launch of a new School of Population Health in the academic year 2022-23. Covid-19 has brought population health science to the fore and raised both awareness and expectations for what it can do to affect the other major challenges affecting population health. Equally, the pandemic has brought new demands for a more responsive, innovative and tightly integrated science. This context, and RCSI's history in population health, medicine and health care has ideally placed the university to respond to these increasing and changing needs of population health science. Preparations this year included the appointment of the inaugural Chair in June 2022. The new school will build on existing strengths in behavioural science for population health, analytic and population health sciences, driven by the Division of Population Health Sciences since 2006.

Quality Enhancement Office Updates

The Quality Enhancement Office (QEO) supports quality assurance and enhancement throughout RCSI. Its activity, throughout the reporting period, was directed by the Annual Work Plan. A new Work Plan was approved at the Quality Committee meeting in March 2022 and continues to be implemented.

The [Quality Assurance Framework](#) is updated regularly and the second edition of the framework was approved by the Quality Committee in December 2020. A further review will be undertaken in 2022.

The [Internal Quality Reviews calendar](#) and Terms of Reference for the Quality Committee and Institutional Review Working Group were reviewed and approved by the Quality Committee in May 2022.

1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR

No.	Planned objectives (Previous AQR) Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	Update on Status Provide brief update on status, whether completed or in progress. If an action was planned in the previous AQR, but not completed, provide reasons/short reflections for the delay/non-completion.
1	Development of a new Academic Integrity Resource	The Academic Integrity Working Group (AIWG) established a sub-group tasked with developing a new online resource to support the introduction of the recently updated Academic Integrity (AI) policy and promote academic integrity across the University. The group was joined by colleagues from online education and digital learning. Key subject areas were identified including: Introduction to AI; RCSI AI policy; Demonstrating AI in practice; Understanding referencing; Using Turnitin®. Subject areas were assigned to sub-group members who created the relevant material and questions. The AIWG, including student representatives, reviewed the draft resource and identified suggested revisions, which were implemented. The AI online resource was completed in time for introduction for the academic year 2022/23.
2	Internal Quality Assurance Review of the Quality Enhancement Office (QEO) – Phases II & III	The appointed Peer Review Group carried out a site visit, over five days in September 2021. This resulted in the publication of a report detailing their findings, commendations and recommendations. Following the appointment of the new Head of the QEO, the QEO team developed a Quality Improvement Plan which was published in the quality area of the RCSI website.
3	Undertake project to investigate ways to reduce the impact of data-gathering activities on the learner population.	The aim of this project was to capture the perspectives of several different stakeholder groups in relation to data gathering activities (surveys & research projects etc.). The results indicated general agreement that the current situation was unsustainable and was yielding reduced quality in terms of results. Recommendations included a review of the governance for such projects (incl. the need for greater efficiency in planning and prioritising). There was agreement that the student voice should have an appropriate place in the governance. Another theme was the perceived need for more support for projects prior to applying for ethical approval. A further recommendation was to highlight the importance of data collection to the organisation and ensuring that the outcomes of data collection projects are made available (where appropriate). Given the current volume of survey-based data-collection there was also a recommendation to investigate ways to diversify collection methodologies (e.g., less surveys, more focus groups). Ways in which these recommendations might be implemented are currently being discussed by the QEO, HPEC and HREC.

4	Planning and preparation for the CINNTE Institutional Review of RCSI (2023)	Two important groups were established to support preparations for Institutional Review. The Institutional Review Working Group, to provide strategic direction and the Institutional Review Drafting Group, to support drafting of the key documentation. An operational and communications plan was developed to support preparations. Cross-institutional engagement was mobilised through extensive communication, including presentations at institution-wide and school events, and at governance committees. Drafting of documents was commenced, drawing input and expertise from across the organisation.
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1.3 Governance and Management

1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Body	Meeting dates
Quality Committee	13 Oct. 2021; 01 Dec. 2021; 02 Mar. 2022; 18 May. 2022 (n = 4 meetings)
Awards & Qualifications Committee	13 Sept. 2021; 18 Oct. 2021; 15 Nov. 2021; 13 Dec 2021; 17 Jan. 2022; 21 Feb. 2022; 21 Mar. 2022; 11 Apr. 2022; 16 May 2022; 20 Jun. 2022 n = 10 (n = 10 meetings)
Academic Council	08 Sept. 2021; 07 Oct. 2021; 10 Nov. 2021; 09 Dec. 2021; 12 Jan. 2022; 03 Feb. 2022; 09 Mar. 2022; 07 Apr. 2022; 11 May 2022 (n = 9 meetings)
Medicine & Health Sciences Board	23 Sept. 2021; 25 Nov. 2021; 17 Feb. 2022; 26 May 2022 (n = 4 meetings)
Surgery & Postgraduate Faculties Board	28 Oct. 2021; 24 Feb. 2022; 28 Apr. 2022; 23 Jun. 2022 (n = 4 meetings)

1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

During the reporting period, the Medicine and Health Sciences Board reappointed or appointed a number of key senior appointments:

- Renewals/reappointments:
 - Professor Hannah McGee, Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
 - Professor Séamus Sreenan, Head of the Graduate Entry Medicine
 - Professor Zena Moore, Head of the School of Nursing and Midwifery
- Appointments:
 - Professor Arnie Hill, Dean of Medical Programmes
 - Professor Gerry McElvaney, Head of the School of Medicine
 - Professor Edward Gregg, Head of the new School of Population Health

New Heads of professional services departments were:

- Liz Hughes, Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Aisling Reast, Head of the Quality Enhancement Office

At RUMC (RCSI & UCD Malaysia Campus), Professor Simon Jones took up the post of Vice President and Registrar.

1.4 Internal Monitoring and Review

1.4.1 Overview of Periodic Reviews

Unit of review for which report has been published during reporting period	Date of completion/reason for conducting review (if not planned) or non-completion (if planned but not conducted)	Links to relevant publications
Quality Enhancement Office	September 2021 Rolling internal quality assurance review	https://www.rcsi.com/quality-enhancement-office/internal-quality-reviews
Office of Research and Innovation	November 2021 Rolling internal quality assurance review	https://www.rcsi.com/quality-enhancement-office/internal-quality-reviews
Irish Institute of Pharmacy	January 2022 Rolling internal quality assurance review	https://www.rcsi.com/quality-enhancement-office/internal-quality-reviews
School of Pharmacy and Biomolecular Sciences	March 2022 Rolling internal quality assurance review	https://www.rcsi.com/quality-enhancement-office/internal-quality-reviews
Graduate School of Healthcare Management	May 2022 Rolling internal quality assurance review	https://www.rcsi.com/quality-enhancement-office/internal-quality-reviews

1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels³ involved in IQA

(i) Expert Review Team/Panel Size and Related Processes

	Total	Academic Schools/ Department	Professional Services/Support Unit	Approval/Review of Linked Provider	Programme Approval	Programme Review	Other**
Number of review/ evaluation processes	10	3	2		4		1
<i>of those:</i>							
On-site processes	0						
Desk reviews	0						
Virtual processes	10	3	2		4		1
Average panel size for each process type*		5	5		4		3

* excluding secretary if not a full panel member

** Approvals - existing programmes - Major Changes

³ QQI acknowledges that the terminology used to describe the groups of individuals that conduct peer review/evaluation varies from institution to institution.

(ii) Composition of Expert Review Teams/Panels involved in IQA

Type of Expert/ Role on Panel	Total	Gender			Internal	National	International			Institution Type	
		Male	Female	Other, or unspecified			UK, incl. NI	Other European	Outside of Europe	Similar	Different
Chair	5*	1	4			5					
Secretary	5	5				5					
Academic/Discipline Specific	34	17	17		14	2	14	2	2		
Student Representative	4		4			4				3	1
QA	5*									5	
Teaching & Learning											
External Industry /Third Mission	3		3		1	2				1	2

* **NB:** PRG chairs hold QA roles in higher education in Ireland

2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

Governance and Management of Quality

New quality activities focused on preparation for upcoming external QA activities. Two important groups were established to support preparations for Institutional Review. The Institutional Review Working Group, to provide strategic direction and the Institutional Review Drafting Group, to support drafting of the key documentation. A further group, the IEM Group, was established to provide feedback on the draft Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Higher Education to International Learners and to support preparations for the introduction of the International Education Mark.

Programmes of Education and Training

Approved Programmes

The following new programmes, verified by the Awards & Qualifications Committee, were recommended for approval by the Medicine & Health Sciences Board:

- BSc (Hons) Advanced Therapeutic Technologies (Major Award, NFQ Level 8, 270 ECTS)
 - BSc (Ordinary) Advanced Therapeutic Technologies (Major Award, NFQ Level 7, 210 ECTS)
 - Diploma in Therapeutic Technologies (Minor Award, level 7, 120 ECTS)
 - Certificate in Therapeutic Technologies (Minor Award, level 7, >40 ECTS)
- MSc in Technologies and Precision Medicine with Industry (Major award; 120 ECTS; NFQ Level 9)
 - Postgraduate Certificate (Minor Award; 30 ECTS; NFQ Level 9)
 - Postgraduate Diploma (Major Award; 60 ECTS; NFQ Level 9)
- MSc in Occupational Health (Major award; 90 ECTS; Irish NFQ Level 9)
 - Postgraduate Certificate (Minor Award; 30 ECTS; NFQ Level 9)
 - Postgraduate Diploma (Major Award; 60 ECTS; NFQ Level 9)
- MSc in Positive Health Coaching (Major award; 90 ECTS; Irish NFQ Level 9)
 - Postgraduate Certificate (Minor Award; 30 ECTS; NFQ Level 9)
 - Postgraduate Diploma (Major Award; 60 ECTS; NFQ Level 9)

Curricular Transformation at the School of Medicine

Preparations for implementation progressed as part of the Transforming Healthcare Education Project (THEP 2). A THEP implementation team was established in September 2021 tasked with ensuring the smooth transition for both students and staff through the curriculum delivery and assessment changes. This preparation has ensured that implementation of this new curriculum will progress as planned in September 2022.

Curricular Redesign at the School of Pharmacy and Biomolecular Sciences.

The MPharm curriculum was redesigned in accordance with the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland's Accreditation Standards, which require regular evaluation of the programme. A wide range of stakeholders were consulted, including staff, students, employers, alumni, external experts, external examiners, patients and the public. The External Peer Review Group, who reviewed the School in March 2022, commended "the positive engagement of staff with students on developing and reviewing curriculum and assessment methodologies. For example, initiatives such as the opportunity for co-creation of curriculum in some fourth-year modules" and "the reflective and evidence-based approach to curriculum design with significant publication output on educational developments." The revised programme will commence in September 2022.

Using Digital Technology in the School of Physiotherapy

An eLearning musculoskeletal toolkit is being developed for physiotherapy students to integrate academic and clinical education and further consolidate clinical reasoning, assessment and treatment skills. A StEP project was embedded into toolkit development to ensure students' needs were being addressed in the toolkit content and functionality. Three prototype modules are now available for students to use in their clinical placements and will be evaluated through a research study exploring students' experience and satisfaction of using the toolkit.

Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

RCSI INSPIRE

The RCSI INSPIRE staff wellbeing programme continued to run employee wellness activities throughout the reporting period, including mindfulness sessions, mental health awareness training, and social coffee mornings. The events were often held in collaboration with university-wide partners including the Sports & Social Club, RCSI Gym and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Unit. The programme is based on four health pillars: physical, nutritional, mental and occupational health. RCSI INSPIRE also oversees the maintenance of RCSI's Ibec KeepWell Mark workplace accreditation which demonstrates RCSI's commitment to employee health, wellbeing and safety. In addition, during the reporting period, RCSI was included in the Business & Finance/Ibec top 100 companies in Ireland who are Leading the Way in Workplace Wellbeing.

Enhancements in Equality Diversity and Inclusion.

RCSI is committed to building an inclusive learning and work environment where all students and staff can reach their full potential. During this reporting period, the three student and staff forums and six staff networks undertook a variety of projects to progress this mission. The VisABILITY and Ending Sexual Violence and Promoting Consent Forum progressed work on disability inclusion, safe campus, and consent. The Women's Network hosted a public online event "Discover Research Stories", which showcased the latest scientific discoveries of women academics and researchers at RCSI, and supported the delivery of the "MyHealth: Living Well Through Perimenopause and Menopause" series. The second edition of RCSI's Positive Ageing Booklet was launched, and a staff BBQ to celebrate Pride week was hosted in collaboration with RCSI's Sports and Social Club. To mark International Women's Day, an event was held to raise awareness of bias, stereotypes and discrimination and how we can all play an active role to #BreakTheBias.

The RCSI Race Equality Forum led the way for RCSI to become the first Higher Education Institution in Ireland to launch a three-year Race Equality Action Plan. This plan reinforces RCSI commitment to ensuring that the experience of its students, trainees and staff is defined by respect, equality and inclusion. Developed by RCSI students and staff, with external advice, the plan identifies a comprehensive list of actions that are being implemented, and involves listening to and learning from the lived experiences of students and staff.

The School of Nursing and Midwifery and School of Physiotherapy at RCSI University of Medicine and Health Science achieved Athena SWAN Bronze accreditation for positive gender practice in higher education. The Institutional Athena Swan Working Group commenced preparations for renewing RCSI's Bronze Award in the coming academic year. Important initiatives including developing a Conference Participation Fund to support attendance at national conferences, particularly for those with caring responsibilities; adding a section in the promotion application form to recognise EDI activity; and governance measures to ensure 40% minimum gender representation on influential institutional committees. In addition, the EDI unit worked in partnership with the RCSI Simulation Team, UCC and TU Dublin to deliver a HEA-funded research project, LIBRA, to develop a simulation-based training programme in gender equality and leadership.

On the 19 October 2021, RCSI joined 18 Irish HEIs in launching SpeakOut, an anonymous reporting tool aimed at creating safe campus communities. This tool facilitates policy implementation and signposts staff and students to support services.

RCSI continued to deliver a suite of EDI training for students and staff covering various equality matters. Over 400 students and staff attended training on topics including Race Equality, Autism Awareness, Trans101 and Awareness & Disclosure training, thanks to support from partners including AS I Am, DRCC, Enable Ireland, Advancing EDI and TENI.

Supports and resources for learners

Library

Enhanced library services, introduced during COVID, to support hybrid/remote learners continued; this included Click & Collect and Click & Deliver services to enable book borrowing, Scan & Send for copying book excerpts, and the very successful Virtual Information Desk for user enquiries, which included LibChat. The managed access to study spaces for all learning communities was gradually relaxed as Library spaces were adjusted at several points over the year in response to changing campus guidelines e.g., 2 metre social distancing reduced to 1 metre social distancing to normal seating arrangements; this included the reintroduction of Group Study Room bookings. A revised layout for the Collaborative Study Zone, 26 York Street completed in January 2022 resulted in a 50% increase in capacity.

New Patient Care Laboratory at the School of Pharmacy & Biomolecular Sciences

A new Patient Care Laboratory was designed to provide a learning space for up to 88 students, reflecting the innovative MPharm curriculum design and teaching and learning strategy. The flexible learning space accommodates the increase in student numbers on the programme, provides a simulated pharmacy for patient-centred laboratories, and facilitates case-based learning, group-work, OSCEs and patient-contact sessions. The existing laboratory was also renovated to accommodate increased student numbers and support science teaching in both the MPharm programme and the new BSc in Advanced Therapeutic Technologies.

Student Engagement

The RCSI Strategic Plan 2018-2022 places student partnership as a core strategic enabler in striving to transform healthcare education, research and service for the benefit of human health. This is being realised through the RCSI StEP programme. The third RCSI StEP Agreement launched during the reporting period, a formal agreement between RCSI and the Student Union (SU) and PGSU, which reflects RCSI's commitment to students as co-creators of their learning experience.

Students and staff can apply for StEP funding to work collaboratively on key projects designed to enhance the overall student experience. There are two open calls for StEP funding annually. In 2021-2022, 12 level 1 and 14 level 2 StEP-funded projects were funded. Level 1 funding provides a bursary to students who work in partnership with staff during semester time (maximum 30 contact hours over 10 weeks). Level 2 funding is more substantial where students receive bursaries and work full-time in collaboration with staff on key projects over eight weeks during the summer. As a testament to the impact and success of these projects, of the 9 innovations short-listed for the RCSI Education Innovation Award 2021 (one award annually), 6 resulted from student partnership initiatives (of these, 4 were StEP-funded projects) with the winning innovation being the StEP-funded project that led to an online auscultation resource for students and staff.

30 staff and 24 students received Student Partnership Champion Award during the reporting period. These awards are presented to students and staff who have made outstanding contributions to the overall student experience by working in partnership and sharing their expertise and perspectives on key RCSI projects.

RCSI StEP programme outputs have also resulted in presentations at national and international seminars, publications, and independent StEP-related research funding. During the reporting period, students and staff have also received national Irish Network of Healthcare Educators funding to progress the outputs of StEP project initiatives.

Affiliation with the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP) was facilitated through the appointment of the Deputy Dean for Student Engagement onto the NStEP National Advisory Board during this period. Students and staff also availed of NStEP training programmes.

The student partnership philosophy extended to RCSI-Bahrain, who adopted RCSI's StEP programme in November 2021.

As external evidence of university-wide student engagement and partnership, RCSI was presented with the highly prestigious and internationally-recognised ASPIRE-To-Excellence Award for Student Engagement during the AMEE conference in Lyon, France in August 2022. RCSI was also awarded the Sunday Times University of the Year for Student Engagement 2022.

RCSI Student Leadership Development Programme

A bespoke 6-week Student Leadership Development Programme took place during February and March of 2022. It was developed, in partnership with students, under the formal Student Engagement and Partnership (StEP) programme. The over-arching programme aim was to equip students with an understanding of the core concepts of leadership to support them in their leadership roles. The programme was divided into four key themes: (i) Developing Influential Leadership Skills; (ii) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; (iii) Self-Care and Resilience as Leaders and (iv) Data Protection. Student leaders from the SU, PGSU, Postdoctoral society, Sports' Council, Society Presidents, Club Captains, Learning Community Leaders and class representatives from all undergraduate Schools were invited to participate. 82 student leaders successfully completed this programme and received RCSI Certificates of Achievement and digital badges.

Information Technology Changes to Support Curricular Change

A number of Information Technology systems were introduced to support introduction of the new Medicine curriculum. Kaizen, the new RCSI Student Dashboard and Assessment solution, will be introduced in September 2022. This system provides a solution for providing students and academics with "real-time" assessment information and through multi format platform delivery (computer and mobile accessibility) both students and staff will be able to access Kaizen from any device. Kaizen will act as the core facilitator in calculating students GPA results integrating with RCSI's new and existing platforms. Practique is the new RCSI Examination System which will provide a solution for delivering written, CAP and OSCE type examinations online and in person.

Student Support

In September 2021, RCSI was shortlisted in the "Outstanding Support for Students" category at the Times Higher Education (THE) Awards. This shortlisting reflected RCSI's commitment to place students at the centre of planning during the [Covid pandemic](#).

Information and Data Management

Central to the development of the current RCSI Strategic Plan 2018-2022 'Transforming Healthcare Education, Research and Service' was the definition of groups of individual projects under each of the three main strategic pillars: (i) Delivering a transformative learning experience; (ii) Leading impactful research; (iii) Supporting healthcare and society. For each project, key deliverables and timelines were defined with associated metrics to monitor their implementation. These metrics were gathered, analysed and reported quarterly by the CEO's Office. Other key metrics are monitored and reported annually by the Insights & Planning Office, the Student, Academic and Regulatory Affairs Office (registry), the Office of Research & Innovation, the Admissions Office, Faculties, Schools and overseas Campuses.

Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review

The collection, analysis and dissemination of student feedback in RCSI is managed by the QEO. The QEO ran and processed over 329 surveys during the reporting period. Response rates varied, depending on the nature and audience of the project, with a rate of 25% on the end-of-semester student feedback surveys (Semester 2).

All students in undergraduate, taught postgraduate and research degree programmes at RCSI-Dublin and overseas are given an opportunity to give their anonymous and confidential feedback each semester. Following the successful implementation of a student poll mechanism, all internal student surveys were renamed "Student Pulse" to bring together all student voice opportunities and offer consistent communication. The Student Pulse poll frequency has been reduced to two end of semester surveys and four shorter polls. The first poll in the

academic year focused on first year student experience; this gathers feedback on recruitment, on-boarding and induction experience which leads to enhancements in communication to prospective students. Student Pulse results were regularly presented to the Senior Management Team and reports were distributed to Schools and professional departments. Examples of actions taken as a result of student feedback were gathered in an open-access Moodle page available to students and staff. RCSI Students' Union played an active role in encouraging participation. The regular end of Semester data collection tools were continued as in previous years. The end of Semester surveys were developed in collaboration with programme directors, faculty and the Students' Union. The QEO conducts an in-depth analysis of both quantitative and qualitative feedback with the aim to inform and enhance the delivery of RCSI programmes. Reports, documenting these analyses, are circulated to programme directors. In addition, in order to close the feedback loop, quantitative reports (without open ended comments) are routinely made available to students via Moodle.

During the reporting period, the QEO commenced stakeholder consultation to better understand current practice in responding to student feedback. A range of formal and informal mechanisms to close the feedback loop, are in place in schools and professional departments, however it was discovered that more consistency is needed in the current processes and a decision was made to develop an institutional repository to gather information on quality enhancements based on feedback. A proposal for a new process was presented to the Senior Management Team and Academic Council with a view to implementation in 2022-2023.

RCSI also continued its participation in StudentSurvey.ie and responded to a call to provide case studies to contribute to the publication of the [Trends Over Time Report](#) published by Studentsurvey.ie.

In response to feedback from Postgraduate Students' Union, the QEO worked with the School of Postgraduate Studies to develop a scholar experience survey which gathers feedback from research postgraduate scholars. The survey is conducted in each semester and coincides with registration periods. It focuses on scholar-specific matters such as supervision, work-life balance and support.

In addition to student surveys the QEO runs staff surveys, including the annual Equality, Diversity & Inclusion survey and supports the Human Resources Department with design and analysis of the quarterly Staff Pulse survey. The QEO also manages feedback processes for professional trainees under the auspices of the National Surgical Training Programme, APPEL and the Irish Institute of Pharmacy.

Survey administration was also enhanced this year by an investment in an enhanced survey tool, which improved the functionality of surveys allowing the creation of a question library that can be easily transferred between surveys, which significantly reduces setup time for reoccurring surveys. New functionalities offer a dedicated survey platform and enhanced functionality for creating survey invitations.

Other Parties Involved in Education and Training

RCSI Hospitals Group

RCSI is the Academic Partner of the RCSI Hospitals Group, established in 2015, which comprises Beaumont Hospital, Connolly Hospital, Cavan and Monaghan Hospital, Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Louth County Hospital and the Rotunda Hospital. RCSI students undertake their education and clinical training placements across the hospitals of the Group in addition to a range of associated GP practices, private hospitals and other clinical facilities. The RCSI Hospitals Group serves populations across North Dublin, Meath, Louth, Cavan and Monaghan in an area that stretches from Dublin City Centre, north to the border with Northern Ireland, and west to the border with County Donegal. This area comprises urban, rural and commuter belt areas with a total catchment population projected to reach 875,000 (& 1.1 million for maternity services) in 2021. The Group provides a wide range of emergency, diagnostic, treatment and rehabilitation services, supported by a workforce of over 8,000 staff.

Dublin City Council & Dublin Fire Brigade

RCSI entered into a partnership agreement with Dublin City Council and Dublin Fire Brigade (DFB) in 2002 for the development and provision of Pre-Hospital Emergency Care education and training in accordance with the standards and procedures set down by the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council. Through this agreement, a Diploma in Emergency Medical Technology (NFQ Level 7) is undertaken over two academic years by all DFB personnel as part of their employment as firefighter/paramedics for the provision of fire & rescue services in the Dublin Metropolitan Area. A partnership board meets quarterly and oversees the development and implementation of the training programmes.

Irish Hospice Foundation

RCSI has provided postgraduate education programmes in bereavement and loss in partnership with the Irish Hospice Foundation, since 2004. RCSI offers three programmes in collaboration with IHF, one Professional Certificate and two Masters programmes. Programme Examination Boards are facilitated by RCSI and held twice per year.

National College of Art & Design

RCSI and the National College of Art and Design (NCAD) signed a Memorandum of Understanding in November 2019 to collaborate on the design and commercialisation of healthcare innovations, building on a collaboration first established in 2016. The agreement establishes a framework for joint projects with industry partners in the fields of medical device design, surgical trainer design, procedure task analysis, prototyping, and innovation in healthcare practices and processes. Realistic surgical simulators are crucial to help surgical trainees reach competence more rapidly. The collaboration provides access to NCAD's design expertise for RCSI medical device innovations, opportunities for NCAD students (particularly those engaged in the MSc in Medical Device Design) to analyse the technical steps involved in completing a surgical procedure thus informing the design of new, more realistic surgical simulators and opportunities for RCSI surgical trainees to learn surgical skills on more accurate surgical simulators.

Third-mission activities, societal and community engagement

Green Awards

RCSI was recognised for its commitment to sustainability with the 2022 Best Green Campus Award at the annual Education Awards. The Education Awards recognise, encourage and celebrate excellence in the third level education sector on the island of Ireland. RCSI also won the Green Healthcare Award and the Sustainable Energy Achievement Award at the 2022 Green Awards. The Green Awards recognise the extraordinary contribution and commitment that companies make towards growing a greener future in Irish business.

RCSI Engage and REACH RCSI Programme

The RCSI Engage vision is to enhance human health and education by building reciprocal partnerships between RCSI staff and students and local and national communities. The REACH (Recreation Education And Community Health) RCSI Programme is the local community engagement and access programme connecting RCSI with the local community, facilitating access to education for groups traditionally underrepresented and promoting health. Community partnerships and involvement of RCSI students and staff through volunteering, community engaged learning and staff/student partnerships are central to the reciprocal nature of the programme. Highlights during the reporting period included:

REACH Christmas in the Community 2021

In December 2021, REACH RCSI safely connected RCSI students with primary school children in making and delivering festive gifts to older people in the university's local area. In place of the annual Christmas celebration for older people, one hundred gift bags were hand-delivered by staff and student volunteers to their homes in the local community. These gifts included decorations created by local primary school children during virtual decoration-making workshops demonstrated by students from two RCSI societies: Dublin Outreach Society and

Association of Women Surgeons. Additionally, RCSI was delighted to donate bicycles to local residents, youth and community groups to support health and wellbeing in the community.

Physiotherapy Projects

REACH RCSI piloted a new initiative with RCSI School of Physiotherapy which saw RCSI students promoting physical activity with local primary school children and conducting student led clinics with a local football team.

REACH Junior Researcher Programme

SFI Discover funding was awarded to develop the Junior Researcher Programme which seeks to engage and inspire curiosity and confidence in science among Junior Cycle students of DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) schools. Interactive laboratory sessions, led by RCSI researchers and PhD scholar mentors, aim to encourage participants to develop an interest and enthusiasm for science.

HEA PATH Network

RCSI is a proud member of a six-college consortium with University College Dublin, Institute of Art and Design, Marino Institute of Education, National College of Art and Design and Trinity College Dublin in this HEA-funded initiative to collaboratively promote and advance equality of access to higher education for under-represented groups. This year collaborative initiatives included:

- Creative Arts Summer School took place in June 2022 and RCSI hosted 60 participants from underrepresented groups.
- 1916 Bursary. A further 4 RCSI students received 1916 Bursaries this year in this HEA funded initiative which supports students from target groups underrepresented in higher education for the duration of their programme. An in-person celebration was held at UCD in April 2022 to recognise 1916 Bursary awardees from all member HEIs in 2020 and 2021.

Dublin Learning City Festival 2022

Dublin Learning City initiative aims to ensure that education and learning is accessible and free for all individuals, regardless of age or cultural background, in traditional and non-traditional settings. The annual Dublin Learning City Festival 2022 took place in March and nine RCSI representatives shared an array of in person and virtual learning opportunities.

Transition Year MiniMed, Pharmacy and Physiotherapy Programmes

Due to COVID-19 restrictions in early 2022, the TY programme was held virtually for the second time with over 6,000 students registered across the three programmes. Budding healthcare professionals learned what it's really like to train and work as a doctor, pharmacist or physiotherapist, with talks and video sessions including across general practice, heart surgery, pathology, paediatrics, forensic medicine, transplants, obstetrics and gynaecology. RCSI expert speakers took time out of their busy clinical and academic schedules to deliver informative and, most importantly, inspiring sessions throughout the week.

RCSI MyHealth Lecture Series

The RCSI MyHealth lecture series continued as pre-recorded, virtual events for 2021/22. The autumn/winter 2021 lectures focused on learning to live well while emerging from the pandemic, with RCSI experts leading discussions about Long COVID, booster vaccines and the pillars of lifestyle medicine. Later topics included positive ageing, heart health, peri-menopause and menopause, cancer and neurological disorders. The transition to virtual delivery of the RCSI MyHealth series has led to greater reach and impact of these important discussions, both nationally and internationally. The eight RCSI MyHealth episodes in the 2021/22 series have had more than 13,000 views on YouTube.

RCSI MyHealth Expert Directory

The RCSI MyHealth Expert Directory is a resource for journalists that brings together details of RCSI experts, across a range of healthcare issues and concerns, in an online listing. In support of the UN Sustainable Development Goal to promote good health and wellbeing, these academics, clinicians and researchers are

willing to engage with the media in their area of expertise so they can empower people with information that leads them to better health.

Positive Psychology

The Centre's for Positive Psychology and Health's free online course, "The Science of Health and Happiness", has now seen almost 32,000 enrolments and received overwhelmingly positive feedback. Building on this success, the Centre launched free courses, "The Science of Health and Happiness for Young People" and "The Science of Health and Happiness as We Age", during the reporting period.

Institute of Global Surgery

Formally launched in 2021, the Institute of Global Surgery builds on RCSI's proven track record and works to improve access to high-quality, essential surgical care for underserved populations. In March 2022, the Institute hosted the first Dublin Meeting in Patient-Centred Global Surgery. This two-day meeting was held in-person and online. More than 200 delegates from 20 countries participated in the conference.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

RCSI was proud to rank top 50 in the world in Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings 2022, published in April, for its contribution to the UNSDG 3 'Good Health and Well-being'. This year RCSI became the first institution in the Republic of Ireland to be awarded Beacon Status in Sustainable Healthcare by the Centre for Sustainable Healthcare (CSH). Achieving this reflects RCSI's commitment to integrating a more environmentally, socially, and financially sustainable approach to healthcare education. In further support of the SDGs, RCSI is leading a national project. Climate Health in Medical Education aims to develop a shared planetary health curriculum for medical schools across the island of Ireland. RCSI is also participating in a comprehensive review by the UK Climate and Health Alliance of Net Carbon Zero in healthcare. Working with the Royal College of Surgeons of England, the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, this initiative reflects RCSI's commitment to promoting sustainability in surgery.

Solar Farm at RCSI Bahrain

In June 2022, RCSI Bahrain launched a Solar Farm project. With its estimated completion by January 2023, the solar farm will cover 12,000sq m with 4,854 solar panels and produce an expected yearly energy production of 3.54MWh, equivalent to 55% of RCSI Bahrain's current energy consumption.

Quality Assurance of Research Activities and Programmes

A number of research activity enhancements were implemented during the reporting period. Researchers at RCSI published a total of 1,739 PubMed indexed articles in 2021 (up 21% on 2020). The total external funding awarded to RCSI for the calendar year 2021 was €37.5 million (up €6 million on 2020).

Cancer Centre Accreditation

The Beaumont RCSI Cancer Centre, an innovative collaboration between Beaumont Hospital, RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences and St Luke's Radiation Oncology Network was accredited for the quality and standards of cancer care and research by the OECl, a European organisation who set comprehensive standards for cancer centres and networks. The Centre, independently evaluated by a team of experts, was praised as "a patient-centred organisation with well-coordinated research structures and a dynamic education system".

Public and Patient Involvement in Research

During the reporting period, RCSI marked its participation in the national public and patient involvement Ignite Network, as part of the official launch of the network, co-funded by the Health Research Board and the Irish Research Council. The PPI (Public and Patient Involvement) Ignite Network is a collaboration between seven Irish universities and a total of over 60 partner organisations, including patient organisations, participating at both national and local levels.

Commercialisation

In the most successful year to date, RCSI approved the formation of four new spin-out companies. In 2021, the growth in RCSI's knowledge transfer performance continued with RCSI exceeding targets independently set by Knowledge Transfer Ireland, with the value of research commercialisation funding reaching €2.4 million. Industry engagement, as measured by number of agreements, exceeded targets by 18% and industry funding grew to €5.2m (from €4.5m the previous year).

SPHeRE Funding

SPHeRE (Structured Population & Health Services Research Education) is a structured PhD programme run jointly by RCSI and eight partner universities across Ireland. In March 2022, the Health Research Board (HRB) confirmed €6million funding for the next phase of the SPHeRE programme, which drives research to address Ireland's current and emerging health and social care challenges. This funding will support 30 HRB-funded PhD scholars, plus a number of additional, alternatively funded scholars up to 2030.

2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity

RCSI, as a health sciences university and surgical Royal College, espouses the highest standards of professionalism among academic staff, students, graduates, postgraduate trainees, Members and Fellows. Academic Integrity (AI) is a key component of professionalism.

Students registering on undergraduate and postgraduate programmes are required to sign the University's Student Agreement, indicating their agreement to adhere to all relevant policies and regulations; this includes the Academic Integrity Policy.

As an indication of the importance of Academic Integrity to the University, RCSI has an Academic Integrity Working Group (AIWG) as a formal structure to assist RCSI to monitor and respond to initiatives launched by National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) and by QQI in area of academic integrity.

Following up on the development of a new Academic Integrity Policy during the previous academic year, the AIWG agreed that a new online resource was needed to support the introduction of the AI policy and promote adherence to the principles of academic integrity across the University. The Academic Integrity Working Group established a sub-group tasked with developing this resource. Key subject areas were identified including: Introduction to AI; RCSI's AI policy; Demonstrating AI in practice; Understanding referencing; Using Turnitin®. Members of the sub-group worked with online education and digital learning colleagues to develop the resource. The AIWG, including student representatives, reviewed the draft resource and identified suggested revisions, which were implemented. The AI online resource was completed in time for introduction for the academic year 2022/23.

RCSI is a member of QQI's National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN). The Head of Registry Services and the Head of the Quality Enhancement Office represented RCSI at NAIN throughout the reporting period. In addition, the Quality Committee approved the nomination of the Convenor of AWIG to NAIN in March of this year. Several RCSI staff attended NAIN Academic Integrity events, this reporting period, including a masterclass on a practical guide to contact cheating.

The Head of the QEO is a member of the NAIN Steering Committee and, as such, is well placed to share information on AI matters both through informal mechanisms such as the WorkVivo staff communications platform and formal mechanisms such as governance committees. This included a presentation to Academic Council in May of this year. In her role on the NAIN Steering Committee, the Head of the QEO recorded a QQI NAIN podcast and presented at the HECA/National Forum Seminar on Responding to the Challenge of Academic Impropriety, among other activities this reporting period.

In relation to the maintenance of the highest standards of professionalism in research and associated postgraduate degree programmes, RCSI [research governance](#) principles align with the [European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#). Postgraduate research students must sign and agree the Postgraduate Code of Conduct on registration and must acknowledge the [RCSI Statement on Research Integrity](#). All research students must complete a Research Ethics and Integrity module in their first year to ensure that they have a basic grounding in the concepts of research integrity. Postgraduate research students funded through National funding agencies (e.g., Irish Research Council, Science Foundation Ireland, Health Research Board) must also complete additional research integrity training (Epigeum, UK).

3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period

3.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives

No.	Relevant objectives Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	Planned actions and indicators <i>Note: Include details of unit responsible, and how planned action will address the relevant strategic priority and/or reengagement advice/CINNTE recommendation.</i> <i>If the institution is preparing for cyclical review, include how the planned actions will address the relevant review objective(s).</i>
1	CINNTE Objective 1: To review the effectiveness and implementation of the QA procedures of the institution through consideration of the procedures set out, primarily, in the AIQR.... CINNTE objective 3: To review the effectiveness and implementation of procedures for access, transfer and progression....	The QEO will oversee institutional engagement in meaningful self-reflection to inform the development of an Institutional Self-Evaluation Report that will address both QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines, 2016, and a reflection on research activities. This process will include the active engagement of the Institutional Review Drafting Group in evaluative processes, and consultation with the wider RCSI community, including through governance committees.
2	CINNTE objective 2: To review the enhancement of quality by the institution through governance, policy, and procedures.	The QEO will complete a programme of cross-institutional communication and awareness building to identify quality enhancement projects to showcase as case studies within the Institutional Review submission. Staff will be provided with support and guidance to prepare case studies for submission.
3	CINNTE objective 4: Following the introduction of a statutory international education quality assurance scheme, to determine compliance with the Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes to International Learners.	In preparation for both the CINNTE review, and the introduction of the International Education Mark, the IEM Group will be reconvened to undertake a self-evaluation and support preparations for IEM application.
4	Objective: To develop a central repository for quality enhancements actions to support closing the feedback loop on student surveys and other feedback mechanisms.	The QEO will develop a central database to collect information on quality enhancement initiatives from undergraduate programme and professional departments in response to feedback from student surveys, external examiners, staff or other sources. The database will collect information on best practices and quality enhancements and will provide information for 'You said we did' campaigns with students.

3.2 Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods

3.2.1 Reviews planned for Next Reporting Period

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
Student Services Office	November 2022	May 2012

3.2.2 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

Link to Quality Reviews Schedule [RCSI Internal QA/QI & Institutional Reviews Schedule](#)

4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies

Case Study 1

Title: ASPIRE Award

Theme: Student Engagement

Keywords: Engagement, Award, Student Partnership

Introduction

The [RCSI Strategic Plan 2018-2022](#) incorporated *student partnership* as a key enabler in striving to “transform healthcare education, research and service for the benefit of human health”. This resulted in the establishment of a senior academic appointment (Deputy Dean for Student Engagement) in 2018, the subsequent establishment of the RCSI Student Engagement and Partnership (StEP) Committee and ultimately, the launch of a formal RCSI StEP programme in 2020. A critical task in the development of the RCSI StEP programme was the identification of criteria and approaches to embed best practice in student engagement and partnership in RCSI.

Initiative

In order to develop a culture of student engagement and partnership in RCSI, a review of best practices in international universities recognised for excellence in student engagement was undertaken. This included visits by the Deputy Dean to exemplar institutions. The next critical step was a review of the [AMEE ASPIRE award criteria for student engagement](#); it was considered that using these criteria to drive RCSI’s approach and inform the basis of the StEP programme would support RCSI to achieve excellence in the field.

RCSI progressed the design and implementation of its StEP programme. This included the development of an RCSI definition of student partnership, the establishment of an RCSI StEP framework, the publication of annual RCSI StEP Agreements and the launch of funded StEP projects. By August 2021, students and staff had partnered on 18 formal StEP funded projects and it was clear that a culture of student engagement and partnership was considered embedded within RCSI’s DNA; a remarkable feat in a short period of time.

It was considered that RCSI now met the four criteria as outlined in the AMEE ASPIRE award application, which recognises world class excellence in student engagement. If this award was achieved, it would serve to validate that RCSI was indeed embedding a universal culture of student engagement and partnership across the university.

A small Working Group was established to prepare the ASPIRE award application comprising the Deputy Dean for Student Engagement, a Senior Project specialist and five medical students (three of which were leaders in SU teams that spanned three years and two additional students who had received StEP project funding). The process was supported by numerous colleagues across the university who provided key evidence to support the application. The draft application was shared with senior colleagues including the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs and the Director of THEP (Transforming Healthcare Education Project), the SU team and class representatives across all years of the School of Medicine for review and feedback. A challenge was understanding the depth and breadth of evidence required to support the application. RCSI therefore reached out to the ASPIRE Student Engagement Panel Co-Chair who kindly provided clear guidance. The application was submitted in February 2022.

Outcome

RCSI was presented with the highly prestigious and internationally-recognised AMEE ASPIRE-To-Excellence Award for Student Engagement during the AMEE conference in Lyon, France in August 2022. A student and RCSI staff travelled to Lyon to accept the award together, in the ongoing spirit of partnership.

The award recognises RCSI's efforts to ensure that the expertise and perspectives of students and staff are equally valued and to put the voice of the student at the centre of the University's decision-making. RCSI is the first Irish medical school to receive this honour and joins a prestigious group of just 12 European medical schools to be recognised for world-class excellence in Student Engagement.

AMEE have set out that "The [ASPIRE award programme](#) was established to go beyond the traditional accreditation process, and to identify, recognise and reward world-class excellence in education."

As a result of this recognition, the Deputy Dean for Student Engagement, Professor Marmion, is now a member of the AMEE ASPIRE Academy. Achievement of this award also demonstrates to potential learners, students, staff and other stakeholders that RCSI is a global leader in student engagement and partnership and that RCSI's quest for excellence is part of our vision and mission. As set out by the Vice Chancellor, Professor Cathal Kelly, RCSI "has cultivated an academic environment wherein students have real agency and have the opportunity to build the knowledge and skills that will enable them to become change-makers as they advance in their careers."

Case Study 2

Title: Student Success

Theme: Student Success

Keywords: Student Engagement, Student Success, Student Partnership



Introduction

Student success is currently one of the key priorities in the national higher education sector with many higher education institutions developing strategies and initiatives in this area. RCSI offers a range of academic and professional support systems to promote student success, however at times they are not being communicated in a manner that directly links them with student success. To address this, RCSI undertook a Student Engagement and Partnership (StEP) project to develop a definition of student success in the unique context of RCSI and build a framework to appropriately address students' needs in this area.

Initiative

A student was recruited to be part of a multidisciplinary project team, which also included academic and professional staff members, with an aim to develop RCSI's definition of student success and benchmark it against the [national definition](#) by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning. Another objective was to review current best practices in the Irish and international Higher Education sector for supporting student success, such as existing student success strategies, action plans, initiatives and support systems.

Student and staff feedback collected through anonymous and voluntary surveys was crucial to developing a better understanding of staff and students' perspectives. Oversight of data collection was provided by the Quality Enhancement Office. Students were asked to explain what student success means to them, describe key enablers and barriers to succeed and how RCSI can better support student success. Staff could comment on how they could contribute to student success as well as identify key enablers and barriers.

Survey data was analysed collaboratively within the team and the student member provided valuable insights into the meaning of the results. While student success can have many flavours, some common themes were identified and an evidence-base was built to guide further action. It was confirmed that support system from peers, family, staff and the institution play a central role in student success. Findings from the survey guided the team to develop a draft definition of student success. A series of consultations have been undertaken with the Senior Management Team, Heads of Schools and heads of selected support departments who provided valuable input and shaped the final definition which is available [here](#).

Outcome

Following the analysis of survey data and further reflection, the team concluded that, to maximise impact, the projects that support student success are to be embedded in the existing structures of the University. As such, student success is now firmly embedded within RCSI's Annual Student Engagement and Partnership (StEP) Agreements, formal agreements between RCSI and the SU and PGSU teams.

Inclusion in these Agreements ensures that student success support is formally acknowledged and visible to senior decision-makers and students alike. This integration allows for a better synergy between the existing student support initiatives and student success.

As part of the StEP Agreement, student success has also been included as one of the priority areas for student-staff partnership projects for the academic year 2022-23. This way students and staff can submit proposals for funded projects to foster student success. Students and staff will be afforded the opportunity to work in partnership on these projects during the 2022-23 academic year. To better highlight the importance of student success the student member also worked with the Design department of RCSI to develop a visual identity (logo) for student success. The logo, along with a summary of the project, is now published on the RCSI website. Overall, the student success initiative paved the way to create tools for students and staff to directly impact and support student success.

Case Study 3

Title: Enhancement of Technology to Support Assessment

Theme: Rethinking Assessment

Keywords: IT Platforms, Assessment

Introduction

Society and medicine are changing at an ever-accelerating rate. Publications have highlighted the critical importance of evolution in the education of our doctors, to ensure they are equipped to:

1. Work effectively in an ever-changing society
2. Provide leadership as part of the medical world
3. Support the development of health systems

Recognising this need, RCSI published its Transforming Healthcare Education, Research and Service (2018 – 2022) strategy in 2018. This strategy outlined how RCSI intends to deliver an unrivalled student experience, through the transformation of its medical education.

As part of this transformation, a dedicated group of subject matter experts were brought together to lead the “Transforming Healthcare Education Project” (THEP2). As the key aspect of the new Medical curriculum focussed on a Programmatic Assessment model, new technology platforms were required to support these needs.

Initiative

Technology and access to “real-time” information is to play a key role in supporting RCSI’s medical students through a programmatic assessment journey, in the delivery of the new curriculum. To support this “little and often” assessment approach, RCSI needed to identify solutions that would support students to complete examinations and to get a quick turnaround on assessment performance via a centralised Student Dashboard.

In 2019, meetings took place with other international universities, to understand contemporary practice and identify exceptional practice. Meetings were also held with IT providers to identify possible solutions. Most importantly, a series of workshops were held with staff and students, to understand the various “must-have” system functionality items and of course the value-added extras for the development of a new curriculum technology solution.

As RCSI’s curriculum is delivered across multiple campuses, stakeholders from Dublin and Bahrain were recruited to contribute their input across key work-streams:

1. Teaching and Learning
2. Assessment
3. Personal Tutor Programme
4. Learning Environment
5. Clinical Placement
6. Student Choice

Three new applications were identified to support assessment of the new curriculum; Practique, Kaizen and InPlace. A project was then undertaken to develop these systems for RCSI’s needs and to embed and fully integrate them within RCSI’s systems.

Cross-institutional collaboration was required to implement this project and key stakeholders included IT, Student Academic and Regulatory Affairs (SARA), academic staff, clinicians, students and senior management. This project was governed by the THEP Implementation team, who reported to the Senior Management Team on a monthly basis, both on progress and on anticipated challenges. Updates were also provided at Academic Council and through RCSI's International Education Forum, in order to secure cross- institutional input and buy in.

Like many projects of this nature, there were a number of challenges experienced. These included:

- Securing key stakeholders for testing and piloting. A dedicated subject matter expert and project coordinator were seconded to the THEP Implementation team on a 2-year term to overcome this challenge.
- Change management. As these new systems and processes created a new way of working for staff, close collaboration with all academic departments was required as was their input in testing and piloting activities.

Outcome

These new technologies were ready for implementation in time for the September 2022 change in the medical curriculum. It is intended that they will increase active student engagement and facilitate assessment and individual feedback on an ongoing basis to support students to become healthcare professionals, who learn from feedback and develop on their academic journey.

It is also hoped that the introduction of these new systems, will increase accuracy, as academic staff interact directly within the system, removing the "middle-person" required for data entry to provide students with results and feedback. Further use of these new technologies is now planned for additional academic programmes.

Case Study 4

Title: Longitudinal Community Pharmacy Placements

Theme: Ensuring the Quality of Placements

Keywords: Placements, Experiential Learning

Introduction

Longitudinal placements are “a regular, recurrent placement in the same setting with the same supervisor over a period of time”. “Continuity” is the organising principle for promoting learning. Longitudinal placements establish more opportunities for connection with patients (“continuity of care”), integrate knowledge, skills and attitudes and link experiential learning to the curriculum (“continuity of curriculum”) and enhance supervision, role modelling and mentoring (“continuity of supervision”).

Initiative

The Longitudinal Clinical Pharmacy Placement (LCPP) was introduced in RCSI with the commencement of a new integrated programme in 2015. The LCPP was designed as one half-day per week, in the same community pharmacy, for the duration of the second semester in Year 2 of the programme. Students are required to complete a workbook and particularly engage with one patient to promote patient interaction. The design was based on the published literature, which mainly pertains to medicine. The placements are managed by the Affiliation for Pharmacy Practice Experiential Learning (APPEL). The other Schools of Pharmacy opted for a two-week block. The Head of School of Pharmacy supported the LCPP initiative, and the Director of APPEL agreed to implement the LCPP on behalf of RCSI.

The LCPP was suspended during the Covid-19 pandemic, given the risks to the junior students outweighed the benefits to the public. Senior pharmacy students remained on placement and contributed to the provision of healthcare. The LCPP was reintroduced in February 2022 with diminished risks to students through vaccination, and the benefit to their learning.

Outcome

An explanatory mixed methods study sought to explore if the LCPP promoted learning through student patient-centeredness, curricular integration, and growing professional engagement.⁴ Quantitative data for the study was collected prior to and after the LCPP using a questionnaire incorporating a validated measure of professional engagement (S-PIPE instrument) and items relating to patient-centeredness and curriculum integration. Semi-structured interviews were then conducted with students, supervisors and practice-educators. There was a 78% response rate (47/60 paired responses) to the questionnaire and 25 interviews were conducted. There was quantitative and qualitative evidence of patient connection during LCPPs. Curriculum integration was enhanced by the longitudinal nature of the placement. There was a significant increase in the sum scores of the S-PIPE instrument, indicating enhanced professional engagement. Qualitatively there was evidence that engagement was promoted through role modelling and supervision. Some students had fewer opportunities to connect with people, and for some changes in supervisor compromised continuity of supervision. The placement, therefore, needs to be of a sufficient length to enable repeated patient

⁴ Kerr A, Boland F, Pawlikowska T, Strawbridge J. Early longitudinal community pharmacy placements: Connection, integration and engagement. *Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy*. 2021 Jul 1;17(7):1313-20.

interaction. Students, supervisors and practice-educators agreed that there would be an advantage in increasing the time spent on placement.

An enhancement to these placements was introduced for the 2021-22 academic year. The experience of teaching through the Covid-19 pandemic was used positively, as the timetable was rescheduled to feature online learning on the morning of the LCPP. This gave additional flexibility for travelling for students attending placements near their homes or accommodation, and may provide for an increase in the time spent on placement in the future. Overall, the research showed that an early LCPP promotes learning by providing opportunities for curriculum integration and professional engagement, an important element of the pharmacy curriculum.

Glossary

Acronym	Definition
AC	Academic Council
APM	Annual Programme Monitoring
A&QC	Awards & Qualifications Committee
AIWG	Academic Integrity Working Group
ARC	Academic Review Committee
ASC	Academic Search Committee
CoMPPAS	(RCSI's) Centre for Mastery: Personal, Professional & Academic Success
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
DAB	Designated Awarding Body
DARE	Disability Access Route to Education
DVCAA	Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
DFB	Dublin Fire Brigade
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
ERC	Education and Research Centre
EUA	European Universities Association
FOI	Freedom of Information
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEAR	Higher Education Access Route
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HPEC	Health Professions Education Centre
HRB	Health Research Board
IHEQN	Irish Higher Education Quality Network
IMC	Irish Medical Council
IPO	Insights and Planning Office
IRWG	Institutional Review Working Group
IUQB	Irish Universities Quality Board
LCPP	Longitudinal Clinical Pharmacy Placement
LP	Linked Provider
MGP	Medical Graduate Profile
MHSB	Medicine & Health Sciences Board

MMC	Malaysian Medical Council (Statutory Accreditation Body)
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MQA	Malaysian Qualifications Agency
NAIN	National Academic Integrity Network
NCAD	National College of Art and Design
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications (Ireland)
NMBI	Nursing & Midwifery Board of Ireland (Statutory Accreditation Body)
NQAI	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland
NStEP	National Student Engagement Programme
NUI	National University of Ireland
ORI	Office of Research & Innovation
PDP	Professional Development Planning
PGR	Postgraduate Research
PGSU	Postgraduate Students' Union
PPI	Public and Patient Involvement
PRSB	Professional Regulatory and Statutory Body
PSI	Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (Statutory Accreditation Body)
PU	Perdana University (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)
QA/QI	Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement
QC	Quality Committee
QEC	Quality Enhancement Committee
QEO	Quality Enhancement Office
QIP	Quality Improvement Plan
QQI	Quality & Qualifications Ireland
RSSDP	Research Supervisor Support & Development Programme
RUMC	RCSI – UCD Malaysia Campus (Penang, Malaysia)
SARA	Student Academic & Regulatory Affairs (Registry)
SGD	Sustainable Development Goal
SLG	Senior Leaders Group
SMT	RCSI Senior Management Team
SPFB	Surgery & Postgraduate Faculties Board
SPGS	School of Postgraduate Studies

SPHeRE	Structured Population & Health Services Research Education
StEP	Student Engagement and Partnership
SU	Students' Union
THE	Times Higher Education
THEP	Transforming Healthcare Education Project
UCD	University College Dublin
UKCGE	UK Council for Graduate Education