

Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland

Annual Institutional Quality Assurance Report 2020

Based on the reporting period 1 September 2018 – 31 August 2019



The Cyclical Review Process

Part 1

Overview of internal QA governance, policies and procedures

Overarching institution-level approach and policy for QA (ESG 1.1)

1. Overarching Institution Quality Policy

A brief synopsis of the overarching institution quality policy which sets out the links between QA policy and procedures and the strategy and strategic management of the institution.

RCSI aims to develop and maintain an all-pervasive culture of quality in which responsibility for the quality of the student experience, and for continuous quality enhancement, is shared by all staff. We are committed to ensuring that we deliver a quality educational experience to our students and, as one of Ireland's leaders in the area of transnational education provision, to ensuring that students based on our overseas campuses receive a learning experience which is equivalent to that of students based in Ireland.

RCSI is committed to robust, transparent processes and procedures for ongoing quality assurance and quality enhancement of academic programmes, postgraduate/professional training programmes, Schools, Faculties and Support Units both in Ireland and on its overseas branch campuses.

The RCSI quality policy supports, informs and responds to the College's institutional strategy, identifying as core values of RCSI the quality of the student experience, continuous quality enhancement in all of our activities and the quality of our contribution to our stakeholders and to the communities in which we work across the world.

[RCSI Quality Policy](#)

The RCSI Strategic Plan 2018-2022 'Transforming Healthcare Education, Research and Service' identifies Quality as one of the three foundations for, and measures of, successful delivery of the Plan's provisions (together with Reputation and Equality, Diversity & Inclusion).

The development of formal quality policies, procedures and associated governance & implementation structures commenced on the activation of RCSI independent degree-awarding powers in 2010. At that time RCSI established the Medicine & Health Sciences Board (MHSB) and the Surgery & Postgraduate Faculties Board (SPFB) as parallel governing bodies overseeing the educational and professional activities of the College. MHSB is the governing body for all RCSI educational programmes leading to degree awards in the health sciences, while SPFB is the cognate body governing all RCSI postgraduate/professional training programmes and certification in Surgery and related specialties. Both of these Boards operate under authority delegated to them by the RCSI Council. Recognising the growing complexity and breadth of the College's activities beyond Surgery, Council in 2013 established the College Board as an advisory body for RCSI.

The Quality Committee and its executive function, the Quality Enhancement Office (QEO), were established also in 2010. The Quality Committee is chaired by the Chief Executive Officer of RCSI and reports both to MHSB and to SPFB. It is responsible for the creation of policy and for the implementation of quality processes and Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement activities across academic, professional and administrative areas of all RCSI campuses. The role of the QEO is to support the implementation of the RCSI quality policy by coordinating all relevant activities and by collecting the data needed to allow the Quality Committee to quality assure all aspects of programme delivery. The QEO currently has a staff complement of four and is located in the historic RCSI building on St. Stephen's Green (Dublin 2).

The QEO manages four parallel cycles of quality reviews:

- Internal Quality Assurance (QA) Reviews of Schools within the Faculty 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 and Programmes.

Additionally, the QEO administers thematic and bespoke reviews as directed by the Quality Committee, MHSB and SPFB.

The QEO also plays a significant role in gathering key metrics concerning student satisfaction and engagement through the administration of a wide range of student surveys (covering all campuses & programmes) both national and international.

2. Quality assurance decision-making fora

A brief description of institution-level quality assurance decision-making fora

The RCSI Quality Committee (QC) reports both to the Medicine & Health Sciences Board (MHSB) and the Surgery & Postgraduate Faculties Board (SPFB), the governing authorities for the degree-awarding and professional training/licensing activities of RCSI respectively. Minutes of QC meetings, together with associated documents, are submitted to MHSB & SPFB for review and discussion. The Director of Quality Enhancement presents to both Boards regularly in addition to presenting the Quality Committee annual report to both Boards and to RCSI Council. The Quality Enhancement Office (QEO) acts as the 'executive arm' of the QC and reports to the Chief Executive Officer and to the QC. The QC has one standing sub-committee, the Institutional Review Working Group (IRWG), the work of which is coordinated and supported by the QEO. The role of the IRWG is to coordinate the self-evaluation process in preparation for periodic institutional review of RCSI. The QEO also provides operational support to the RCSI Research Ethics Committee in its role as 'gatekeeper' for requests to carry out surveys of students and staff.

[RCSI internal governance structures relevant to quality](#)

Confirmation of QA Policy and Procedures

1. Programme Design and Approval (ESG 1.2)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance policy and procedures for the design and approval of new programmes.

All matters related to programme design & approval lie within the remit of the RCSI Awards & Qualifications Committee (AQC) which reports to the Medicine & Health Sciences Board.

[Terms of Reference for the AQC](#)

The AQC has developed and implemented a set of policies, guidelines and document templates for the establishment of new programmes leading to educational awards, including establishment of the business case and the detailed presentation of the programme for academic evaluation. The relevant documents can be accessed here:

[Business Case Form](#)

[Academic Proposal Form](#)

Following internal review by the AQC, an application goes forward to the Medicine & Health Sciences Board. Once approved by MHSB, the programme is subject to external review by two external reviewers, one nominated by RCSI and one by the National University of Ireland (NUI). Following final modifications made to the programme proposal based upon the reviewers' comments, the proposal goes forward to the MHSB and, ultimately, to the NUI Senate for final approval.

[N.B. 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. Accordingly, degrees of RCSI are awards of the NUI and, in consequence, the procedure for programme design and approval is designed to meet the requirements of both RCSI & NUI.]

The Awards & Qualifications Committee also administers a rolling schedule of Programmatic Reviews within RCSI.

[Programmatic Review Guidelines](#)

2. Programme Delivery and Assessment (ESG 1.3)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance policies and procedures for the ongoing delivery and assessment of programmes.

RCSI does not have a single over-arching policy document on Programme Delivery & Assessment. Rather, each School and/or Faculty has responsibility for producing its own policies & procedures governing these key areas, including curriculum documents (& databases), course handbooks for students, Marks & Standards documents, assessment strategy documents, examination handbooks (for students) and appeals procedures. These documents are disseminated to students and staff via the Moodle virtual learning environment, but they are not published on the public-facing RCSI website.

3. Research Quality (ESG 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.9)

Links and/or text relating to any specific quality assurance procedures for the design, approval, delivery, assessment and monitoring of research programmes, if they exist.

RCSI 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 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 issued to all research personnel. All of these policies are subject to regular review and updating as required. These documents are disseminated to students and staff via the Moodle virtual learning environment, but they are not published on the public-facing RCSI web-site.

The SPGS has developed and implemented a set of complementary policies and procedures dealing with all aspects of higher degrees by research (MSc, MD & PhD). These policies are subject to regular review and updating as required, and have been benchmarked against the recommendations of the report of the QQI Expert Panel on the Quality Assurance of Research Degree Programmes in Irish Higher Education Institutions; they are published on the public-facing RCSI web-site at:

<http://www.rcsi.ie/ResearchPostgraduatePolicies>

The RCSI Research Ethics Committee (REC) acts to ensure the highest standards of conduct in research at RCSI and to support staff in pursuing this goal. It does this [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:

<https://www.rcsi.com/dublin/research-and-innovation/research/resources-and-facilities/research-ethics>

The Data Science Centre (DSC) seeks to improve human health and quality of life by applying a rigorous and innovative approach to the design, analysis and reporting of health research studies. The DSC staff, with expertise in biostatistics, bioinformatics, epidemiology and data management, collaborate with RCSI researchers, departments and faculties on high-impact substantive research projects and lead cutting-edge methodological research advancing knowledge in biostatistics and bioinformatics:

<https://www.rcsi.com/dublin/research-and-innovation/research/resources-and-facilities/data-science-centre>

4. Student Lifecycle (ESG 1.4)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures that are encompassed by the student lifecycle.

The 'Study at RCSI' section of the RCSI website (<https://www.rcsi.com/dublin>) contains all of the relevant information related to student admission for all programmes (undergraduate and postgraduate). This includes admission criteria and detailed descriptions of the application process for the various student categories (i.e. EU / Non EU, school leaver / mature entry etc.) and the relevant fee schedules (and scholarship / access opportunities). This section of the website also provides access to the policy documents that underpin the various aspects of the admissions process. As well as formal information, the website also provides access to video testimonials from students, staff and alumni, details of 'Open Days' and contact information for additional queries.

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 Health Services, Library Facilities, Societies & Sports and Student Support & Welfare. Registration is completed in the afternoon and new students are issued with their RCSI student cards, which give access to the library, gym, computer labs and other areas of the RCSI campus. In addition, laptops, log-in details for RCSI online services, including the Virtual Learning Environment (Moodle) and RCSI e-mail account details are also distributed. RCSI offers first year students a formal induction programme – 'Passport for Success' – which is a series of lectures and workshops on various topics including study skills, self-care, support services, etc.

RCSI has a strict no transfer policy and does not accept transfer requests from students attending other courses, including other RCSI courses and RCSI international campuses.

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 virtual learning environment. There are also policies on the relevant appeals processes. Monitoring of progression rates for students in the first year of undergraduate programmes is routinely done by the Admissions Office. Progression rates of other years are monitored by the Student, Academic & Regulatory Affairs office (SARA; registry) and by Cycle / Programme Committees. Graduation rates for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes are monitored and reported annually as part of the suite of RCSI internal key performance indicators.

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 Moodle or email) as soon as is practicable following the relevant Examinations Board meeting. At the end of each academic year, students are sent a Transcript of their results. These transcripts provide a full breakdown of all major summative and professional examinations taken by that student that year.

A range of academic support services is provided to students by CoMPPAS, the Centre for Mastery: Personal, Professional & Academic Success. CoMPPAS is staffed by a multi-disciplinary team working to assist students to maximise their potential or enhance their performance, and also to assist students to overcome the challenges they may face during their training and to encourage them to develop sustainable strategies for success as future healthcare professionals. The services provided by CoMPPAS include learning skills, language & communications skills, well-being (including facilitating confidential access to GP & counselling services), life-skills, volunteering, community engagement and career development:

<http://www.rcsi.ie/comppas>

CoMPPAS synergises with the Student Services Office which provides complementary support services to RCSI students.

RCSI has two Students' Unions – Undergraduate and Postgraduate – and Students' Union Officers and Class Representatives are members of internal governance committees at all levels in the institution up to (and including) the Medicine & Health Sciences Board.

5. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring the competence of teaching staff, including staff recruitment and staff development.

In the recruitment of staff for roles that include teaching, job descriptions may require qualifications and/or experience in teaching; such criteria are defined on a case by case basis.

In terms of staff development, RCSI supports staff (in terms of fees and protected time) to participate in the Postgraduate Diploma in Health Professions Education offered by the Health Professions Education Centre, which runs in Dublin separately on the city centre and Beaumont Hospital campuses. HPEC also offers a range of other educational inputs for staff including Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) Workshops, Best Evidence in Medical Education (BEME) Workshops and the monthly HPEC 'Fast Facts' educational digest circulated by e-mail. In parallel, RCSI offers a number of subsidised places to staff on a range of other programmes run by the Institute of Leadership and the School of Nursing. Staff may apply also, via their Department or School, for financial support to undertake education-focused courses in other higher education institutions in Ireland or elsewhere. Short courses are arranged by the Human Resources Department and publicised via the Virtual Learning Environment and internal mailing-lists, and staff members can undertake their own on-line training through LinkedIn Learning which is available to staff. RCSI has policies on study/exam leave for staff members.

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 through which they identify their goals 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 also operates a 'Peer-Observation of Teaching' programme through which staff can obtain constructive and informal feedback on their teaching from a selection of their peers; this is administered by HPEC. Within academic departments, staff may receive feedback on their teaching derived from the student feedback survey data which is disseminated by the Quality Enhancement Office.

6. Teaching and Learning (ESG 1.4, 1.5, 1.6)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring the quality of teaching and learning.

The primary method of monitoring the quality of teaching and learning is via the student feedback surveys run by the Quality Enhancement Office. RCSI survey policy is to apply a centralised core and options model of evaluation across all undergraduate courses and campuses. 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 central role played by the QEO ensures that the data is collected, processed and reported in a consistent way.

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 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 Moodle. The quantitative survey response data are made available directly to students via the Moodle virtual learning environment shortly after the data have been processed.

Externally, feedback on student engagement is collected independently from first and final year undergraduate students and from postgraduate research students via StudentSurvey.ie, formerly the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE). 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.

7. Resources and Support (ESG 1.5)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring funding and resources for learning, teaching and research. Also, links and or text relating to the quality assurance procedures for learning resources and student support.

Resources and support for learners can be categorised into three broad areas namely physical resources; academic advisory, career services and pastoral care; student support services.

Physical Resources

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 to 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. Information pertaining to student resources and associated policies is available to students and staff through several platforms including the RCSI website, the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), Moodle and representation on all relevant governance committees:

<https://www.rcsi.com/dublin>; <http://www.rcsi.ie/quality>

Subsequent to the completion in 2017 of 26 York Street, a new state-of-the-art facility over 10 floors on the city-centre campus, RCSI has 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 new 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.

Academic Advisory, Career Services and Student Welfare

RCSI provides comprehensive advisory and support services for students. The range of supports includes (but is not limited to) academic advisory services, student welfare (psychological and psychiatric services), disability and access, English language and communications, career guidance, academic support, Erasmus, clinical electives, student research, mentoring programme, and personal development (through the 'Passport for Success' programme). Academic advisory support and career guidance is centralised in the Centre for Mastery: Personal, Professional & Academic Success (CoMPPAS), operating in parallel with the Student Services Office. Input from students in the planning of services and supports is facilitated through routine end of semester surveys, service user surveys and student representation on governance committees and working groups.

Student Support Services

Student support services are coordinated through the Student Services Office. Here students have access to information and support for the following: Accommodation, Financial Assistance, Gym, Immigration and Visa information, Induction & Orientation, Meet & Greet Service, Merchandising, Societies, Sports, Clubs & Teams, Student Awards, Student Events, Student Facilities, Student Life Bursaries.

Comprehensive information and related policies on all supports and services are available to students on Moodle whilst the RCSI website hosts information under the 'Study at RCSI' pages and 'Student Life' pages. In addition, students are informed of supports and services during their orientation and through ongoing workshops and seminars throughout their studies:

<https://www.rcsi.com/dublin>; <https://www.rcsi.com/dublin/student-life>

8. Information Management (ESG 1.7)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for collecting, analysing and using relevant information about programmes and other activities.

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 important information stream that contributes to quality assurance processes and to the monitoring of implementation of institutional strategy. Data that feeds into Institutional Metrics is gathered annually by the Office of Institutional Research & Planning, covering the following areas: student & staff data, student engagement and satisfaction indices, expenditure on teaching and research, research, regional engagement (e.g. income from regional sources), knowledge transfer, and international focus. These are monitored routinely by the Senior Management Team and shared with the key departments within RCSI.

Profile of student population:

RCSI routinely collects information about the student population for RCSI-Dublin and the overseas branch campuses and programmes i.e. RCSI-Bahrain, RCSI-Dubai, RCSI-UCD Malaysia Campus, Perdana University-RCSI School of Medicine. Student profile information is collected through Student, Academic & Regulatory Affairs (SARA) Office.

Student Feedback:

The Quality Enhancement Office (QEO) manages the collection, analysis and dissemination of student feedback in RCSI. All undergraduate students and taught postgraduate students in Dublin, Bahrain, Dubai and Malaysia are given an opportunity to give feedback about modules completed in each semester. The data collection tools are based around a 'core & options' model. All 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 also has an input to the process. 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.

Student progression rates:

Student progression rates are an important indicator of academic quality. RCSI puts a priority on the analysis of performance of first year students and therefore collects and analyses the relevant student

exam performance data. Data collection and analysis lies within the remit of the RCSI Admissions Office. An analysis is undertaken for first sitting and repeat exam performance. Given that RCSI recruits students from multiple countries and academic backgrounds, it is a priority to analyse and compare the performance of different student cohorts and to correlate performance with qualifications at entry. This information is used to assess the suitability of minimum academic entry requirements and to inform decisions on student recruitment. Progression reports are also shared with the relevant Programme & Cycle Directors to inform decision making.

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 processed is managed by the Student, Academic & Regulatory Affairs (SARA) Office.

Career paths of graduates, Members & Fellows:

RCSI does not currently have a formal policy for tracking students' career paths. As a not-for-profit organisation, RCSI is not required to collect information for the HEA First Destination report. In the absence of this, the Student, Academic & Regulatory Affairs (SARA) Office currently gathers ad-hoc information focusing mostly on Northern American graduates of the School of Medicine and their destinations of employment after graduation (up to two years after graduation). In addition, the relationships with RCSI graduates, Members and Fellows are managed through the RCSI Alumni & Development Office. Career path information gathering is a relatively new process started in 2015. RCSI currently collects information about Alumni workplaces and their clinical specialities. Recently a survey was conducted in order to build a more complete picture of Alumni, gathering data from nearly 1000 Alumni was gathered focusing mostly on their memories of college years. The results of the survey were used to inform various Alumni & Development Office activities including marketing and fundraising.

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.

9. Self-evaluation and Monitoring (ESG 1.9)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for self-evaluation and internal monitoring.

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

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. The outcomes of the Programmatic Review process may be:

- [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.

Programme Monitoring:

RCSI overseas branch campuses and programmes submit annual programme monitoring forms to the Quality Enhancement Office in respect of the educational programmes that they deliver, and these are assessed by the Medicine & Health Sciences Board.

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.

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 (QA) Reviews of Schools within the Faculty 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 & Programmes.

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:

<http://www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews>

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 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 on student and staff, student engagement & satisfaction, expenditure on teaching & research, research, regional engagement, knowledge transfer and international focus.

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 Committee conducts an annual 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.

10. Stakeholder Engagement (ESG 1.1)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for the involvement of external stakeholders in quality assurance.

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 Board, 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 above. 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 Support Units, this process is facilitated by the QEO in terms of targeted surveys and, occasionally, formal or informal focus groups.

11. Engagement with Other Bodies (ESG 1.1)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for engagement with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies and other quality assurance and awarding bodies (details of specific engagements should be provided in the online section of the form).

RCSI engages with a large number of external bodies in relation to its educational, research and professional activities. There is no over-arching policy to govern these interactions and these are facilitated on a case by case basis.

12. Provision and Use of Public Information (ESG 1.8)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for the provision of clear, accurate, up-to date and accessible public information.

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:

www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews

Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement (QA/QI) documentation including internal review guidelines and templates for Academic Units and Service Units, guidelines and report templates for Peer Review Groups and guidelines and templates for Quality Improvement Plans are publically available on the RCSI website. In addition the RCSI Quality Policy, the Quality Committee Terms of Reference, Quality Enhancement Office Terms of Reference and Calendar of Reviews are publically available on the RCSI website:

<https://www.rcsi.ie/quality>

Learner Information:

Information on all programmes and awards is publically available on the RCSI website. On the 'Study at RCSI' pages on the RCSI website, learners can find details of all taught programmes available at undergraduate and postgraduate level and of higher degrees by research. Information is tailored for undergraduate learners or postgraduate learners and then for undergraduate learners by the entry routes available to them. Information includes various entry routes, programme award, NFQ level, programme structure, entry requirements, fees, what you will study, student testimonials and how to apply. In addition, learners can easily find information on Access, Scholarships, Student Opportunities (clinical electives, student exchange, Erasmus and undergraduate research):

<https://www.rcsi.com/dublin>

13. Linked Providers (for Designated Awarding Bodies) (ESG 1.1)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring engagement with linked providers including the procedures for approval, monitoring, review, withdrawal of approval and appeal for linked providers.

Not applicable. RCSI currently does not have any Linked Providers.

14. DA Procedures for use of QQI Award Standards (IoTs only)

Links and/or text relating to the specific procedures for the approval of programmes in keeping with Core Policy and Criteria for the Validation of Education and Training Programmes by QQI, the Sectoral Protocols for the Awarding of Research Master Degrees at NFQ Level 9 under Delegated Authority (DA) from QQI and the Sectoral Protocols for the Delegation of Authority by QQI to the Institutes of Technology to make Joint Awards, May 2014.

Not applicable.

15. Collaborative Provision (ESG 1.1)

Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for engagement with third parties for the provision of programmes.

RCSI does not have a formal policy for Collaborative (or Transnational) Provision 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).

16. Additional Notes

Any additional notes can be entered here.

17. Internal Review Schedule

The internal reviews schedule or cycle at the level of unit of review within the institution. The units of review can be: module; programme; department/school; service delivery unit; faculty. The cycle will usually run over a 5-7 year period and all units should be encompassed over the full period of the cycle.

Year	2018/19
Areas/Units	School of Postgraduate Studies; School of Nursing & Midwifery; Department of Surgical Affairs; Conference & Events Office
Number	4
Link(s) to Publications	http://www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews

Year	2019/20
Areas/Units	Institutional Review of RCSI-Dubai; Faculty of Sports & Exercise Medicine; Student, Academic & Regulatory Affairs Office (Registry); Student Services Office; Information Technology Department
Number	5
Link(s) to Publications	http://www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews

Year	2020/21
Areas/Units	School of Physiotherapy; Institute of Leadership; RCSI Libraries; Human Resources Department
Number	4
Link(s) to Publications	http://www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews

Year	2021/22
Areas/Units	School of Pharmacy & Biomolecular Sciences; Faculty of Radiologists; Quality Enhancement Office; Office of Research & Innovation; RCSI-UCD Malaysia Campus
Number	5
Link(s) to Publications	http://www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews

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Year	2022/23
Areas/Units	School of Medicine; Irish Institute of Pharmacy; Estates & Support Services Department; Admissions Office
Number	4
Link(s) to Publications	http://www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews

Year	2023/2024
Areas/Units	Faculty of Dentistry; Finance Department
Number	2
Link(s) to Publications	http://www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews

18. Engagement with Third Parties Section

Details of engagement with third parties, including:

1. Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies
2. Collaborative Provision
3. Articulation Agreements

1. Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

Type of Arrangement	Total Number
PRSBs	4
Awarding Bodies	1
QA Bodies	5

First Type of Arrangement (PRSB/Awarding Body/QA Body):	Awarding Body
Name of Body:	National University of Ireland
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	<p>All RCSI programmes leading to degree awards of the NUI</p> <p>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, degrees of RCSI are awards of the NUI, with the sole exception of the degree of Doctor of Science (DSc) honoris causa which is awarded twice annually, and which is solely and exclusively a degree of RCSI.</p>
Date of Accreditation or Last Review	N/A
Next Review Year	N/A

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Second Type of Arrangement (PRSB/Awarding Body/QA Body):	PRSB
Name of Body:	Medical Council of Ireland
Programme Tiles and Links to Publications	Bachelors Degrees in Medicine, Surgery & Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO]
Date of Accreditation or Last Review	2019
Next Review Year	2026

Third Type of Arrangement (PRSB/Awarding Body/QA Body):	PRSB
Name of Body:	Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland
Programme Tiles and Links to Publications	Masters Degree in Pharmacy (M. Pharm)
Date of Accreditation or Last Review	2017
Next Review Year	2019

Fourth Type of Arrangement (PRSB/Awarding Body/QA Body):	PRSB
Name of Body:	Health & Social Care Professionals Council (CORU) Physiotherapists Registration Board
Programme Tiles and Links to Publications	Bachelors Degree in Physiotherapy
Date of Accreditation or Last Review	2016
Next Review Year	2022

Fifth Type of Arrangement (PRSB/Awarding Body/QA Body):	PRSB
Name of Body:	Malaysian Medical Council
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	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	2018
Next Review Year	2023

2. Collaborative Provision

Type of Arrangement	Total Number
Joint Research Degrees	N/A
Joint/double/multiple awards	1
Collaborative Programmes	2
Franchise Programmes	1
Linked providers (DABs only)	N/A

First 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]
Date of Last Review	2015
Next Review Year	2020

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Second Collaborative Provision:	Collaborative Programme
Name of Body (bodies):	RCSI-UCD Malaysia Campus (Penang, Malaysia) – formerly Penang Medical College
Programme Tiles and Links to Publications	Bachelors Degrees in Medicine, Surgery & Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO]
Date of Last Review	2014
Next Review Year	2021

Third Collaborative Provision:	Collaborative Programme
Name of Body (bodies):	Institute of Technology Tralee
Programme Tiles and Links to Publications	NUI Certificate in Biomedical Sciences
Date of Last Review	2012
Next Review Year	TBC

Fourth Collaborative Provision:	Joint/Double/Multiple Awards & Collaborative Programmes
Name of Body (bodies):	Soochow University [Soochow, China]
Programme Tiles and Links to Publications	Bachelors Degree in International Pharmacy
Date of Last Review	N/A
Next Review Year	2022

3. Articulation Agreements

Articulation Agreements - Total Number	1
First Articulation Agreement:	
Name of Body (bodies):	Soochow University [Soochow, China]
Programme Tiles and Links to Publications	BSc in International Pharmacy
Date of Agreement/Arrangement or Last Review	2018
Review Year for Agreement	2024

Parts 2-6

Institution-led QA – Annual Information

Parts 2-6 are completed annually with information pertaining to the reporting period (i.e. the preceding academic year only).

Part 2: Institution-led QA – Annual

Part 2 provides information relating to institution-led quality assurance for the reporting period.

Section 1: Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Developments

1.1 The evolution of quality assurance and enhancement systems in support of strategic objectives in the reporting period.

RCSI launched its new Strategic Plan 2018-2022 ‘Transforming Healthcare Education, Research and Service’ during the previous reporting period. The Strategic Plan identifies Quality as one of the three foundations for, and measures of, successful delivery of the Plan’s provisions (together with Reputation and Equality, Diversity & Inclusion). The strategy has garnered strong engagement and commitment from project leaders, schools, departments and external partners. As we enter the third of a five year plan, we have completed almost 30% of our committed projects, and key achievements are highlighted in our annual report

https://www.rcsi.ie/files/about-us/20191011112846_AD4301%20RCSI%20Annual%20report_FINA.pdf

Pursuant to its statutory obligations as a Designated Awarding Body, RCSI implements a process of continuous review of the effectiveness of its internal quality assurance policies and procedures through cyclical Quality Assurance (QA) review of academic and administrative ‘units’, including international programmes and branch campuses. The RCSI Quality Committee, through the Quality Enhancement Office (QEO), administers four parallel QA review cycles which commenced in 2011:

1. QA reviews of Schools within the Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences [Units in scope = 6]
2. QA reviews of Professional Services Units [Units in scope = 11]
3. QA reviews of Overseas Branch Campuses & Programmes [Units in scope = 5]
4. QA reviews of Postgraduate/Professional Faculties [Units in scope = 7]

The second Cycles of reviews in categories 1-3 above are now in progress. The first Cycle of reviews in category 4 (Postgraduate/Professional Faculties) commenced during the reporting period with QA reviews of the Department of Surgical Affairs and the Faculty of Sports & Exercise Medicine.

1.2 Significant specific changes (if any) to QA within the institution.

Changes to the Reviews Calendar

As noted previously, the range of accreditation activity carried out by the Postgraduate Regulatory Statutory Bodies (both in Ireland & overseas) in parallel with internal QA reviews can lead to pressure to change the Reviews Calendar. Other competing pressures can impact on reviews of Administrative and Service Units, such as the absence of key staff. Planning had commenced during the previous reporting period for a second Internal QA Review of the School of Physiotherapy due to take place in the current reporting period. However, at the behest of RCSI Senior Management, the Quality Committee agreed to defer this review by one year due to the fact that the post of Professor of Physiotherapy and Head of School remained vacant following the retirement of the previous incumbent.

Revision & review of programme governance documents

During the reporting period, the Academic Council and the Medicine & Health Sciences Board reviewed and approved a wide range of revised/updated governance documents for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, including Marks & Standards, progression regulations, etc.

Changes to the text of AIQR Part 1 for the reporting period

The text of AIQR Part 1 has been updated and the URLs refreshed.

1.3 The schedule of QA governance meetings.

In the period from September 2018 to August 2019, meetings of the relevant governance committees & boards took place on the following dates:

Quality Committee

10 October 2018; 21 November 2018; 13 February 2019; 08 May 2019 [n=4]

Awards & Qualifications Committee

24 Sept. 2018; 27 Nov. 2018; 18 Dec. 2018; 22 Jan. 2019; 19 Feb. 2019; 19 Mar. 2019; 21 May 2019; 18 Jun. 2019 [n=8]

Academic Council

12 September 2018; 11 October 2018; 14 November 2018; 05 December 2018; 16 January 2019; 14 February 2019; 13 March 2019; 11 April 2019; 15 May 2019; 13 June 2019 [n=10]

Medicine & Health Sciences Board

19 September 2018; 05 December 2018; 31 January 2019; 28 March 2019; 30 May 2019 [n=5]

Surgery & Postgraduate Faculties Board

1 November 2018; 21 February 2019; 25 April 2019; 27 June 2019 [n=4]

Section 2: Reviews in the reporting period

2.1 Internal reviews that were completed in the reporting period.

Six internal reviews were completed during the reporting period:

Internal QA Reviews of Schools within the Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences

School of Postgraduate Studies

School of Nursing & Midwifery

Internal QA Reviews of Postgraduate Faculties

Department of Surgical Affairs

Faculty of Sports & Exercise Medicine

Internal QA Reviews of Professional Support Units

Clinical Research Centre

Internal QA Reviews of overseas Branch Campuses & Programmes

RCSI-Dubai

2.2 Profile of internal approval/evaluations and review completed in the reporting period.

Number of new Programme Validations/Programme Approvals completed in the reporting year	5
Number of Programme Reviews completed in the reporting year	1
Number of Research Reviews completed in the reporting year	0
Number of School/Department/Faculty Reviews completed in the reporting year	5
Number of Service Unit Reviews completed in the reporting year	1
Number of Reviews of Arrangements with partner organisations completed in the reporting year	0

2.3 Profile of reviewers and chairs internal approval/evaluations and review for reviews completed in the reporting period.

Composition of Panels	%
Internal	19
National	35
UK	29
EU	6
Student	3
Other	6

Chair Profile	%
Internal	0
Similar Institution	67
Different Institution	0
International	33

Section 3: Other Implementation Factors

3.1 A description of how data is used to support quality assurance and the management of the student learning experience.

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:

- Delivering a transformative learning experience
- Leading impactful research
- Supporting healthcare and society

For each project, key deliverables and timelines were defined with associated metrics to monitor their implementation. These metrics are gathered, analysed and reported quarterly by the CEO's Office.

Other key metrics are monitored and reported annually by the Office of Institutional Research & Planning, the Student, Academic and Regulatory Affairs Office (registry), the Office of Research & Innovation, the Admissions Office, individual Faculties, Schools and overseas Branch Campuses.

The collection, analysis and dissemination of student feedback in RCSI are managed by the QEO. All students in undergraduate, taught postgraduate and research degree programmes at RCSI-Dublin and its overseas branch campuses are given an opportunity to give their confidential feedback each semester. The data collection tools are based around a 'core & options' model; all surveys contain a series of core items relating to the headings of Modules, Assessments, Skills & Staff. Surveys are 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 and, in order to close the feedback loop, quantitative reports (without open ended comments) are routinely made available to students via Moodle. QEO runs staff surveys including the annual Equality, Diversity & Inclusion 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, and facilitates RCSI participation in the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE). The QEO ran and processed over 300 surveys during the reporting period, with response rates ranging from 47% (end-of-semester student feedback surveys) to approximately 30% for other surveys.

The Quality Committee and QEO continue to emphasise the importance of 'closing the feedback loop' with students following surveys, so that students can be assured that their opinions are valued and responded to. A number of units implement 'you said, we did' campaigns to publicise their responses to student feedback, in parallel with regular feedback sessions to classes and to class representatives. During the reporting period, the QEO circulated a 'Closing the Feedback Loop' best practice guide to all Schools and Professional Support Units in receipt of end-of-semester survey reports; this document uses a series of case-studies to illustrate approaches taken by RCSI Schools/Departments and other institutions to document and publicise institutional responses to the views of students.

The management of academic programmes is informed by a range of data including:

- Student feedback via end-of-module or -semester surveys

- 'In-course' examination results
- Academic progression & attrition data
- 'Exit' (final) examination results
- External Examiners' reports
- Reports from periodic accreditation processes carried out by the relevant Postgraduate Regulatory Statutory Bodies (PRSBs)
- Reports from periodic Programmatic Reviews

3.2 Factors that have impacted on quality and quality assurance in the reporting period.

The Quality Enhancement Office manages survey data collection in RCSI centrally with a particular focus on end-of-semester student satisfaction surveys. Response rates were above 50% at the inception of these surveys and the information derived from these surveys was, and continues to be, very valuable. However, since then, response rates have dropped year-on-year. There are several reasons for this, the principal being the degree to which internal demand for surveys has increased year-on-year to the point that students are presented with multiple invitations to participate in surveys during each semester. For example, during the reporting period, the QEO set-up, implemented, promoted, analysed and reported over 200 individual surveys addressing students. The QEO continues to manage the overall number of surveys addressing students to avoid further decrease in response rates due to 'survey fatigue'. To this end, the QEO works closely with the RCSI Research Ethics Committee and other stakeholders to manage survey demand. However, this is proving to be increasingly difficult. This demand is driven also by external survey requests including national surveys (examples during this reporting period include the Eurostudent and MyWorld surveys).

The RCSI Quality Committee (QC) continues to keep the Internal QA Reviews Calendar under review and aims to have Internal QA Review time-lines confirmed well in advance. However, as noted above, changes in PRSB or overseas accreditation body schedules can impact on the calendar. Additionally, given the relatively small size of RCSI as an academic institution, major projects undertaken by a School or other unit and/or unexpected changes in senior personnel can impact resources to the extent that a change to the Internal QA Reviews Calendar must be considered. While the QC tries to keep such changes to a minimum, they can be unavoidable as was the case in the reporting period.

3.3 A description of other implementation issues.

The RCSI Quality Committee and Quality Enhancement Office remain committed to substantive student involvement in Internal QA Review processes, in particular through membership of Peer Review Groups (PRGs). Unfortunately, RCSI Students' Union (SU) Officer posts are of one year in duration and are not sabbatical in nature; this means that SU Officers are on a steep learning curve when elected, and must balance their substantial ongoing course work with their SU roles throughout their term of office. As a result, recruitment of student members to join PRGs for internal QA reviews is very difficult. However, students are involved in the governance of RCSI quality assurance policies & procedures through SU representation on the Quality Committee and on the governing committees and boards to which it reports. RCSI does recruit students for review panels conducting Institutional Reviews of its overseas Branch Campuses; these tend to be international students external to RCSI with previous experience of QA review processes in higher education.

Part 3: Effectiveness and Impact

Part 3 provides information relating to the effectiveness and impact of quality assurance policy and procedures for the reporting period.

1. Effectiveness

Evidence of the effectiveness of QA policies and procedures during the reporting period.

RCSI evaluates the effectiveness of its QA policies and procedures at the level of Faculties, Schools, Administrative/Service Units and overseas Branch Campuses & Programmes through its rolling cycles in internal QA reviews. The overall effectiveness of the institution's QA policies and procedures is evaluated through periodic Institutional Review under the auspices of Quality & Qualifications Ireland.

The first cycles of internal QA Reviews of Schools, Professional Services Units and Overseas Branch Campuses & Programmes were completed during the previous reporting period. The experience gained by the Units which fall in scope of these cycles has led to a greater understanding of the review process and a recognition of the value of the process as an input both to strategic & operational planning and to PRSB accreditation processes.

The QEO analyses Peer Review Group reports, their commendations and recommendations arising from internal QA reviews on an ongoing basis to identify key themes. The most commonly occurring themes among PRG recommendations continue to arise in the areas of Staff Development; Unit Operations; Strategic Planning; Student Records Management System & Registry function; and Organisational Structure & Governance.

2. Impact

Evidence of the impact of QA policies and procedures during the reporting period.

A key determinant of the impact of internal QA review processes is the engagement of each unit with the recommendations contained in the Peer Review Group Report and in developing a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to document planned actions in response to the recommendations. Each QIP is finalised in a process that involves a meeting between the Unit Head, the RCSI Senior Management Team (SMT) and the QEO. This meeting allows the actions to be discussed, their alignment with institutional strategic objectives and plans to be assured and the deployment of resources (where necessary) to be agreed. As a result, the QIP becomes a key input to the Unit's strategic planning and provides a road-map for implementation. Units build elements of their QIPs into their annual business planning process which allows their implementation to be monitored annually by SMT. In addition, the QEO presents a mid-cycle review of the implementation of each QIP to the Medicine & Health Sciences Board some 3-4 years after the date of the last review.

3. Themes

Analysis of the key themes arising within the implementation of QA policies and procedures during the reporting period.

As in previous reporting periods, Peer Review Groups commented on the commitment of RCSI staff to providing excellent service to their students and other stakeholders and their ability to provide a range of services despite, in some cases, a relatively limited staff complement.

As noted above, common themes among PRG recommendations continue to arise in the areas of Staff Development; Unit Operations; Strategic Planning; Student Records Management System & Registry function; and Organisational Structure & Governance.

While the cycle of reviews of Postgraduate/Professional Faculties of RCSI has commenced only recently, a PRG Report noted that the tenure of the Dean of such Faculties tends to be for a period of two years, and pointed out that this duration may be too short to allow for effective longer-term strategic and business planning.

Part 4: Quality Enhancement

Part 4 provides information which goes beyond the description of standard quality assurance procedures. Quality enhancement includes the introduction of new procedures but also extends the concept of quality assurance to other initiatives, activities and events aimed at improving quality across the institution.

4.1 Improvements and Enhancements for the Reporting Period

Improvements or enhancements, impacting on quality or quality assurance, that took place in the reporting period.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion within RCSI

The RCSI Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Committee, supported by the EDI Unit, applied for an Athena-SWAN Bronze Award during the previous reporting period. The adjudication process, the results of which were announced in October 2018, resulted in RCSI receiving an Institutional Bronze Award. As noted previously, the QEO administers EDI surveys of staff and students to establish baseline data to inform the work of the EDI Committee and Unit.

Establishment of a Transnational Collaborative Dual Degree Programme in Pharmacy

RCSI signed a Transnational Collaboration Agreement (TNCA) with Soochow University (SU; Soochow, China) in 2018 to establish a Dual Degree programme in Pharmacy. The TNCA incorporates an Articulation Agreement under which students will enter the SU Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy degree programme and, having met the stated requirements by the end of the second year of the programme, will transfer 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 International Pharmacy. The first students eligible to participate in this ‘twinning’ programme entered the SU BSc programme in Autumn 2018.

Documenting the NUI-RCSI Quality Assurance Relationship

RCSI is a Recognised College of the National University of Ireland (NUI). However, being a Designated Awarding Body, RCSI is not a Linked Provider of NUI. Therefore, while NUI plays a key role in guaranteeing the academic standards of RCSI educational programmes, statutory responsibility for the approval of RCSI Quality Assurance policies and procedures lies with QQI. Given this unique situation, both institutions recognized the need to develop a document which would set out the scope and nature of the QA relationship between NUI and RCSI. Accordingly, a document entitled ‘The Quality Assurance Relationship between the National University of Ireland and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland’ was drafted by the two institutions and was approved by the RCSI Medicine & Health Sciences Board in May 2019. This document will be presented to the NUI Senate for approval in the 2019-2020 reporting period. It is intended that, once approved by both institutions, the documents will be published jointly.

4.2 Quality Enhancement Highlights

Analysis of quality enhancement activities that were initiated during the reporting period and which would be of interest to other institutions and would benefit from wider dissemination.

Case study [Theme: Learner Experience] – RCSI Library

The Quality Enhancement Office (QEO) continues to work with the Quality & Process Improvement Centre (QPIC; Department of Surgical Affairs) to target process optimisation interventions to specific areas identified from consistent themes arising in student satisfaction surveys.

The end-of-semester student satisfaction surveys conducted by the QEO in the 2017-2018 academic year following the opening of the new RCSI Medical School building at No. 26 York Street revealed a substantial decrease in levels of satisfaction with the study space provided in the state-of-the-art RCSI library compared to the previous Library building. Analysis of survey responses indicated that the primary problem lay in students' use of the space, with substantial non-adherence to seat reservation policy and 'hogging' of seats. The Library convened a multidisciplinary team comprising students, Library staff, staff from Estates and Events with facilitation by QPIC to address the issues, and to benchmark responses against similar initiatives undertaken by UCC, UL & DCU. The Library then implemented a series of measures to better manage demand for capacity in the Library (especially in examination periods), to make additional study space more user-friendly and to modify behaviour around seat occupancy. Interventions included live occupancy data reporting, co-design (with students) of a new Seat Reservation Policy and a #FairSpaceForAll campaign to raise awareness of the new measures. The effect of these measures has been monitored over time, and the 2018-2019 surveys demonstrate that, while study space remains a concern for students, there is a clear view that the Seat Reservation Policy and #FairSpaceForAll campaign have had a positive effect, and an appreciation of the Library's responsiveness to students' needs.

Case study [Theme: Transnational Education] - Module delivery in Years 1 & 2 of Soochow programme

As noted above, RCSI established a Dual Degree programme in International Pharmacy with Soochow University (SU) in which students will spend their first two years at SU and their second two years at RCSI. It is widely accepted that there are significant differences in pedagogy and in learning styles between Chinese and Western higher education. In order to prepare potential students for the transition from SU to RCSI, the curriculum incorporates five ECTS credit modules in Years 1 & 2 of the SU programme delivered in Soochow by visiting RCSI staff. These are 'Cardiovascular Health' and 'Gastrointestinal Health'. These modules allow students to familiarize themselves with and gain experience of interactive, case-based teaching and team-based projects, and so prepare them for the transition to RCSI. In addition, the modules were re-designed to reflect local cultural considerations. For example, salt-intake and smoking are the biggest cardiovascular risk factors in Asia (while obesity is the bigger issue in Europe and North America), and so the patient counselling and guidelines in case-based sessions reflect this. Relevant clinical guidelines from both Asia and Europe and North America are compared also to highlight key differences reflecting the 'International' perspective of the programme.

Case study [Theme: Teaching, Learning & Learner Assessment] – Lecture capture

Arising from an initiative of the RCSI Undergraduate Students' Union, RCSI began a pilot project to record lectures in the first two years of the medical degree programme. The rationale for this was that affording an opportunity to review lecture presentations of material that they found challenging off-line would permit students, especially those for whom English is not their first language, to learn and revise at their own pace, thereby facilitating understanding and retention.

The pilot focused on lectures addressing complex topics as identified by students and covered some 15% of the lecture content of the first three semesters. A survey conducted mid-year indicated that 66% of students had used the recorded material in their study and 83% of these found the resource useful. In parallel, focus groups held with academic staff identified a number of areas of concern including the potential impact on student attendance at lectures, copyright issues and resource implications. The pilot project will continue with ongoing monitoring of student uptake of recorded material.

Part 5: Objectives for the coming year

Part 5 provides information about plans for quality assurance in the institution for the academic year following the reporting period (in this instance 1 September 2017 – 31 August 2018).

5.1 Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Plans

Plans for quality assurance and quality enhancement relating to strategic objectives for the next reporting period.

Initiatives planned for the next reporting period include:

- [1] Implementation of a new over-arching RCSI Quality Framework;
- [2] Publication of the document setting out the NUI-RCSI Quality Assurance Relationship
- [3] Necessary revision to Quality Committee policies & procedures, including internal QA review document templates and guidance documents
- [4] Process-mapping of the internal Quality Assurance Review process

5.2 Review Plans

A list of reviews within each category (module, programme, department/school, service delivery unit or faculty), as per the internal review cycle, planned for the next reporting period.

Internal QA Reviews of Schools within the Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences

School of Physiotherapy

Institute of Leadership

Internal QA Reviews of Administrative/Support Units

Library

Student Services Department

Human Resources Department

5.3 Other Plans

The EDI Unit is helping to coordinate individual Athena-SWAN Bronze Award applications by the School of Pharmacy & Biomolecular Sciences, the Department of Anatomy & Regenerative Medicine and the Department of Physiology.

Part 6: Periodic Review

Part 6 provides information that acts as a bridge between the AIQR and periodic external review.

6.1 The Institution and External Review

A description of the impacts of institutional review within the institution.

RCSI has undergone institutional review twice during the past decade, firstly an Institutional Review coordinated by NQAI/HEA in the context of the activation of its independent degree-awarding powers in 2010 and, secondly, an Institutional Review coordinated by QQI in 2013-2014 in completion of the second Cycle of IUQB/QQI Institutional Reviews of the Irish Universities. These reviews have been of fundamental importance to RCSI, providing invaluable peer-validation and guidance. The plans and structures put in place in preparation for these reviews, and the implementation of the Quality Improvement Plans arising from them, have guided our development allowing RCSI to put in place the structures necessary to support its development as a University-level health sciences higher education institution. One of the areas where these Institutional Reviews have been particularly important is in highlighting the dual nature of RCSI as a health sciences higher education institution and a surgical Royal College. Significant work has been done in response to review recommendations to integrate these two facets of the institution more closely in terms of governance, policies and procedures. The next Institutional Review of RCSI will take place in 2022-2023 in the context of the current QQI 'CINNTE' Cycle of Institutional Reviews, which commenced in 2017. Planning for this review commenced during the reporting period.

6.2 Self-Reflection on Quality Assurance

A short evaluative and reflective summary of the overall impact of quality assurance in the reporting period or, over a more extensive period, in the review.

As a provider of higher education and professional training in the health sciences, RCSI is no stranger to external review through its participation in statutory accreditation processes coordinated by the various PRSBs in Ireland and overseas. However, the added-value that we derive from internal and external QA review comes from its focus on quality enhancement rather than compliance, and from internal self-evaluation with peer-validation rather than external-evaluation as the basis of the process.

The implementation of the four internal cycles of QA reviews and RCSI participation in successive external Institutional Reviews has reinforced the existing culture of quality in the institution. Internal QA review is now recognised not only as providing Units with an opportunity to 'take stock', but also as an invaluable adjunct to strategic & operational planning and to preparation for external accreditation processes. It has also proven its worth in the monitoring of transnational & collaborative provision.

The recommendations of the two external Institutional Review Panels (2010 & 2013-2014) focused in part on the dual nature of RCSI as a health sciences higher education institution and a surgical Royal College, and on how these facets relate to each other. The development in 2010 of parallel governance structures has led to greater coherence in institutional governance. Medicine & Health Sciences Board (MHSB) is the governing body for all RCSI educational programmes leading to degree awards in the health sciences, while Surgery & Postgraduate Faculties Board (SPFB) is the cognate body governing all RCSI postgraduate/professional training and certification in Surgery and related specialties. This has also facilitated deeper and wider cooperation across the two areas. For example, since the inception of these Boards, the postgraduate/professional faculties governed by SPFB have begun to develop and offer higher degree courses in Surgery and related specialties that are validated and managed through the degree awarding structures of MHSB. In parallel, degree programmes under the aegis of MHSB have begun to incorporate strategies used by the postgraduate/professional faculties, including procedures for the management of high-stakes clinical examinations, simulation-based training and procedures for the quality assurance of clinical placements.

6.3 Themes

Developmental themes of importance to the institution which will be relevant to periodic review.

As noted during reporting periods, RCSI has instituted a new developmental theme/work-stream, coordinated by the Quality Enhancement Office, to assure the quality of experiential learning (i.e. clinical rotations) in RCSI undergraduate, postgraduate and professional education & training programmes in the health professions. It is intended that this will be a major Enhancement Theme in the context of the CINNTE Institutional Review of RCSI by QQI in 2022-2023.