

# Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland

## Annual Institutional Quality Assurance Report 2018

Based on the reporting period 1 September 2016 – 31 August 2017



The Cyclical Review Process

## Part 1

# Overview of internal QA governance, policies and procedures

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## 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 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 Administrative and 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.

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) and the Irish Survey of Student Engagement.

## **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 the student body.

[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, in parallel, 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, with the sole exception of the degree of Doctor of Science (DSc) *honoris causa* which is awarded twice annually and is solely and exclusively a degree of RCSI. 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:

[http://www.rcsi.ie/Research\\_Ethics](http://www.rcsi.ie/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:

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

#### **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 Undergraduate admissions process and procedures at RCSI are described by three key documents: 1. RCSI Undergraduate Admissions: An overview and policies; 2. RCSI Undergraduate Admissions: Non EU Procedures; 3. RCSI Undergraduate Admissions: EU Procedures.

In terms of the public availability of this information, the 'Study with us' section of the RCSI website (<http://www.rcsi.ie>) contains all 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 has a strict no transfer policy and does not accept transfer requests from students attending other courses, including other RCSI courses.

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 included in a suite of internal metrics that is reported annually.

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.

### **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 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 and also in Bahrain. 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 the Lynda.com website 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). 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. 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 via 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 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:

<http://www.rcsi.ie/studentervices>; <http://www.rcsi.ie/study>; <http://www.rcsi.ie/quality>

The College's campus in Dublin city centre received a major enhancement during 2017 through the completion of No. 26 York Street, a new state-of-the-art facility over 10 floors (six above ground & four below) which provide 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, a library spanning three floors with 500 study spaces, a sports hall and fitness suite, and has been designed to be both energy efficient and environmentally responsible. In parallel, RCSI has invested significantly in a new Department of Simulation, based in the new facility, which will work to integrate Simulation Based Experiential Learning (SBEL) methods in all RCSI education and training programmes with the ultimate aim to enhance patient safety, patient care, education and research.

### 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. Again 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 services: 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 with Us' 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:

<http://www.rcsi.ie/studentervices>; <http://www.rcsi.ie/study>

### **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 Institutional Research & Planning Office, 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 provisions i.e. RCSI-Bahrain, RCSI-Dubai, Penang Medical College, PU-RCSI. Student profile information is collected through Student, Academic & Regulatory Affairs (SARA) Office.

Student Feedback:

The collection, analysis and dissemination of student feedback in RCSI is managed by the Quality Enhancement Office (QEO). All undergraduate students from the School of Medicine, School of Pharmacy and School of Physiotherapy, taught postgraduate students and research degree students 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 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.

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 student exam performance for Foundation Year and Junior Cycle of the medical programme; i.e. the first year exam performance. Data collection and analysis lies within the remit of the RCSI Admissions Office.

An analysis is undertaken for the 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 cohort groups by entry exam (A level, IB, IMCP, etc.) and nationality. This information is then 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 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 will provide 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, 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 to that the relationships with RCSI graduates, Members and Fellows are managed through the RCSI Alumni Office. Career path information gathering is a relatively new process started in 2015. RCSI currently collects information about Alumni workplaces and their speciality. Recently a survey was conducted in order to build a fuller picture of Alumni, data from nearly 1000 Alumni was gathered focusing mostly on their memories of college years. The results of the survey are used to further inform various Alumni Office activities including marketing and fundraising. Apart from career paths information, personal information and contact details are collected to support ongoing contacts with Alumni.

**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. The first cycle of programmatic reviews commenced in 2014 and to-date three programmatic reviews have been conducted: MSc in Healthcare Ethics and Law, MSc in Healthcare Management and the Doctor of Medicine (MD) programme. Programmatic Reviews follow the 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 (two external and one internal panel members), submission of a review report, presentation of the report to the Medicine and 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:**

The Quality Enhancement Office, in conjunction with the SARA Office, administers a system of monitoring which involves annual programme monitoring forms being submitted by all RCSI overseas branch campuses in respect of the educational programmes that they deliver. These reports are presented to and assessed by the Medicine & Health Sciences Board.

#### **Input from External Examiners:**

External Examiners for all educational programmes leading to degree awards are appointed jointly by RCSI and the NUI. These examiners report annually on their evaluation of assessments, 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 Administrative and 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:

<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 ensure accuracy and integrity of the examination process. RCSI also collects and analyse 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. A thorough review of the Risk Register and associated Risk Status Sheets including a review of emerging risks is performed once a year by an Audit Committee. 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, a detailed action plan to address key areas of weakness or vulnerability. Individual risk factors are assigned to Owner at the 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
- 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.)

In terms of students as stakeholders, the primary method of engagement in terms of quality assurance is via the student feedback process as described above. RCSI also engages with staff as stakeholders through periodic Staff Surveys; these 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 reviews of academic and service 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 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 Support Units both in Ireland and overseas. In keeping with this, RCSI publishes all Peer Review Group reports and Quality Improvement Plans arising from internal quality reviews:

[www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews](http://www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews)

However, RCSI does not publish self-assessment reports or output reports and QIPs of programme 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:

[RCSI Quality Enhancement Office Terms of Reference](#)

[RCSI Calendar of Reviews](#)

Learner Information:

Information on all programmes and awards is publically available on the RCSI website. On the 'Study with Us' 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):

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

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

**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) – the RCSI Director of Quality Enhancement was a member of the IHEQN working party which produced these guidelines.

**16. Additional Notes**

Any additional notes can be entered here.

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**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	2016/17
Areas/Units	School of Medicine; Admissions Office; Estates & Support Services
Number	3
Link(s) to Publications	<a href="http://www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews">http://www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews</a>

Year	2017/18
Areas/Units	Finance; Institutional Review of RCSI-Bahrain
Number	2
Link(s) to Publications	<a href="http://www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews">http://www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews</a>

Year	2018/19
Areas/Units	School of Postgraduate Studies; School of Nursing & Midwifery; Department of Surgical Affairs; Health Professions Education Centre; Conference & Events Office; Communications Department; REACH (community outreach) Office
Number	7
Link(s) to Publications	<a href="http://www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews">http://www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews</a>

Year	2019/20
Areas/Units	Institutional Review of RCSI-Dubai; School of Physiotherapy; Faculty of Sports & Exercise Medicine; Student, Academic & Regulatory Affairs Office (Registry); Student Services Office; Alumni & Development Office; Information Technology Department

## Annual Institutional Quality Assurance Report

Number	7
Link(s) to Publications	<a href="http://www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews">http://www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews</a>
Year	2020/21
Areas/Units	Institute of Leadership; Faculty of Radiologists; RCSI Libraries; Human Resources Department; Perdana University-RCSI School of Medicine
Number	5
Link(s) to Publications	<a href="http://www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews">http://www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews</a>

Year	2021/22
Areas/Units	School of Pharmacy; Irish Institute of Pharmacy; Affiliation for Pharmacy Practice Experiential Learning (APPEL); Office of Research & Innovation; Quality Enhancement Office; Penang Medical College
Number	6
Link(s) to Publications	<a href="http://www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews">http://www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews</a>

Year	2022/23
Areas/Units	School of Medicine; Faculty of Dentistry; Estates & Support Services Department; Admissions Office
Number	4
Link(s) to Publications	<a href="http://www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews">http://www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews</a>

Year	2023/24
Areas/Units	Faculty of Nursing & Midwifery; Finance Department
Number	2
Link(s) to Publications	<a href="http://www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews">http://www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews</a>

## AIQR - PART 1

<b>Institution</b>	Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
<b>Full Name</b>	David Croke
<b>E-mail</b>	dtcroke@rcsi.ie
<b>PRSBs</b>	2
<b>Awarding Bodies</b>	1
<b>QA Bodies</b>	2
<b>Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies</b>	First Set of Records
<b>Type of Arrangement</b>	Awarding Body
<b>Name of the Body</b>	National University of Ireland (NUI)
<b>Programme Titles and Links to Publications</b>	RCSI's 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 recognised 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) <i>honoris causa</i> which is awarded twice annually and which is solely and exclusively a degree of RCSI.
<b>Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies</b>	Second Set of Records
<b>Type of Arrangement</b>	PRSB
<b>Name of the Body</b>	Medical Council of Ireland
<b>Programme Titles and Links to Publications</b>	Bachelors degrees in Medicine, Surgery & Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO]
<b>Date of last review or accreditation</b>	09-11-2011
<b>Next review year</b>	2019
<b>Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies</b>	Third Set of Records

<b>Type of Arrangement</b>	PRSB
<b>Name of the Body</b>	Malaysian Medical Council
<b>Programme Titles and Links to Publications</b>	Perdana University-RCSI School of Medicine (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia) Bachelors degrees in Medicine, Surgery & Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO]  Penang Medical College (Penang, Malaysia) Bachelors degrees in Medicine, Surgery & Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO]
<b>Date of last review or accreditation</b>	3-10-2013
<b>Next review year</b>	2018
<b>Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies</b>	Fourth Set of Records
<b>Type of Arrangement</b>	QA Body
<b>Name of the Body</b>	Bahrain Education & Training Quality Authority
<b>Programme Titles and Links to Publications</b>	RCSI-Bahrain: Bachelors degrees in Medicine, Surgery & Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO]; BSc in Nursing; BSc in Nursing (Bridging Programme); MSc in Nursing
<b>Date of last review or accreditation</b>	20-05-2012
<b>Next review year</b>	2018
<b>Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies</b>	Fifth Set of Records
<b>Type of Arrangement</b>	QA Body
<b>Name of the Body</b>	Malaysian Qualifications Agency
<b>Programme Titles and Links to Publications</b>	Perdana University-RCSI School of Medicine (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia) Bachelors degrees in Medicine, Surgery & Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO]  Penang Medical College (Penang, Malaysia) Bachelors degrees in Medicine, Surgery & Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO]
<b>Date of last review or accreditation</b>	3-10-2013
<b>Next review year</b>	2018
<b>Do you wish to make a final submission?</b>	No, this is not my final submission

## AIQR - PART 1

<b>Institution</b>	Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
<b>Full Name</b>	David Croke
<b>E-mail</b>	dtcroke@rcsi.ie
<b>Joint research degrees</b>	0
<b>Joint/double/multiple awards</b>	1
<b>Collaborative programmes</b>	4
<b>Franchise programmes</b>	1
<b>Linked providers (DABs only)</b>	0
<b>Section: Collaborative Provision</b>	First Set of Records
<b>Type of arrangement:</b>	Franchise programmes
<b>Name of the Body (Bodies)</b>	Perdana University-RCSI School of Medicine (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)
<b>Programme Titles and Links to Publications</b>	Bachelors degrees in Medicine, Surgery & Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO]
<b>Date of last review</b>	3-10-2013
<b>Next review year</b>	2018
<b>Section: Collaborative Provision</b>	Second Set of Records
<b>Type of arrangement:</b>	Collaborative programmes
<b>Name of the Body (Bodies)</b>	Penang Medical College (Penang, Malaysia)
<b>Programme Titles and Links to Publications</b>	Bachelors degrees in Medicine, Surgery & Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO]
<b>Date of last review</b>	03-10-2013
<b>Next review year</b>	2018
<b>Section: Collaborative Provision</b>	Third Set of Records
<b>Type of arrangement:</b>	Collaborative programmes
<b>Name of the Body (Bodies)</b>	Institute of Technology Tralee
<b>Programme Titles and Links to Publications</b>	NUI Certificate in Biomedical Sciences

<b>Date of last review</b>	01-04-2012
<b>Section: Collaborative Provision</b>	Fourth Set of Records
<b>Type of arrangement:</b>	Collaborative programmes
<b>Name of the Body (Bodies)</b>	University of Malawi College of Medicine (Blantyre, Malawi)
<b>Programme Titles and Links to Publications</b>	MSc in Community Systems Health Research
<b>Date of last review</b>	01-04-2014
<b>Section: Collaborative Provision</b>	Fifth Set of Records
<b>Type of arrangement:</b>	Collaborative programmes
<b>Name of the Body (Bodies)</b>	University of Sharjah (United Arab Emirates)
<b>Programme Titles and Links to Publications</b>	MSc in Leadership in Health Professions Education
<b>Date of last review</b>	01-07-2013
<b>Section: Collaborative Provision</b>	Sixth Set of Records
<b>Type of arrangement:</b>	Joint/double/multiple awards Collaborative programmes
<b>Name of the Body (Bodies)</b>	Dublin City University & Maynooth University (3U Partnership)
<b>Programme Titles and Links to Publications</b>	MEng in Healthcare Technologies
<b>Date of last review</b>	01-04-2013
<b>Do you wish to make a final submission?</b>	No, this is not my final submission

## 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).

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## 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.

As a ‘designated awarding body’ under the terms of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, RCSI is required to review the effectiveness of its internal quality assurance policies and procedures through cyclical review of academic and administrative ‘units’, including international programmes and branch campuses. Following the establishment of the Quality Enhancement Office (QEO) in late 2010, the first Internal Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement (QA/QI) Reviews took place during 2011 and the process continues, following a calendar of ‘rolling’ reviews developed by the QEO (with Quality Committee approval) in the context of its operational and strategic plans. Four parallel QA review cycles are in operation:

[i] QA reviews of Schools within the Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences – units in scope = 6; status 5/6 complete = 83%;

[ii] QA reviews of Administrative & Service Units – units in scope = 14; status 8/14 complete = 57%;

[iii] QA reviews of Schools within the Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences – units in scope = 6; status 5/6 complete = 83%;

[iv] QA reviews of Postgraduate/Professional Faculties – units in scope = 6; status 0/6 complete = N/A; this cycle commenced during the reporting period.

A thematic review was carried out during the reporting period examining implementation of the RCSI Strategic Plan 2013-2017 ‘Growth & Excellence’ with the aims of assessing the impact of the plan and of identifying key initiatives for inclusion in the successor plan being developed to cover the period 2018-2022.

A number of changes were made to internal QA procedures arising from feedback received from Peer Review Groups:

[1] Benchmarking was introduced as a component of the Self Evaluation Phase of internal QA review

to allow units undergoing review to compare their policies and procedures against a comparator unit elsewhere. A sum of money is made available from the QEO budget to facilitate this process;

[2] A mid-cycle review of implementation of Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) arising from QA reviews was introduced whereby updated QIPs are requested from units that underwent review 3-4 years previously (i.e. approximately mid-cycle) for evaluation by the Quality Committee and by Medicine & Health Sciences Board or Surgery & Postgraduate Faculties Board as appropriate;

[3] In addition to regular reports to the relevant governing boards, a formal annual report will be presented to each board by the Director of Quality Enhancement.

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

### Changes to the Reviews Calendar

A particular issue in the scheduling of reviews at RCSI is the fact that, as a health sciences institution, there is a considerable range of accreditation activity carried out by the Postgraduate Regulatory Statutory Bodies (both in Ireland & overseas) in parallel to internal QA reviews. Change in a PRSB accreditation schedule, or particular operational issues, may prompt a change in the internal QA reviews calendar. Planning had commenced during the previous reporting period for a number of reviews due to take place in the current reporting period:

- [a] Institutional Review of RCSI Bahrain
- [b] Internal QA Review of the School of Nursing & Midwifery
- [c] Internal QA Review of the Department of Surgical Affairs
- [d] Internal QA Review of the Alumni & Fellows Office

Following representations to the Quality Committee by the relevant Units Heads, these reviews were deferred by 12 months.

### 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 2016 to August 2017, the following meetings of the relevant governance committees & boards took place:

RCSI Quality Committee

Four meetings: 05 October 2016; 16 November 2016; 18 January 2017; 26 April 2017

Medicine & Health Sciences Board

22 September 2016; 16 November 2016; 26 January 2017; 30 March 2017; 25 May 2017

Surgery & Postgraduate Faculties Board

27 October 2016; 15 December 2016; 23 February 2017; 27 April 2017; 29 June 2017

## Section 2: Reviews in the reporting period

### 2.1 Internal reviews that were completed in the reporting period.

Internal QA Review of the Estates & Support Services Department

Thematic Review of implementation of the RCSI Strategic Plan 2013-2017 ‘Growth & Excellence’

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

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

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

<b>Composition of Panels</b>	<b>%</b>
Internal	<b>18</b>
National	18
UK	9
EU	-
Student	-
Other	55

<b>Chair Profile</b>	<b>%</b>
Internal	N/A
Similar Institution	50
Different Institution	-
International	50

### 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.

Survey data collection in RCSI is centralised and managed by the Quality Enhancement Office (QEO) since 2010. Feedback from undergraduate students is collected twice a year at the end of each Semester, whereas postgraduate students are typically surveyed either once a year or on a modular basis. Results are reported to Cycle or Programme Directors who disseminate the findings to their staff and are also responsible for closing the feedback loop with students. During this reporting period, the QEO conducted over 220 surveys with response rates ranging from above 50% (end-of-semester student feedback surveys) to approximately 30% for other surveys. In addition to surveys of students in degree-awarding programmes, the QEO manages feedback processes for professional trainees under the auspices of the National Surgical Training Programme and the Irish Institute of Pharmacy. A longitudinal analysis of trends in student satisfaction data was carried out and the findings presented to the RCSI Senior Management Team.

In addition to routine end of semester feedback, the QEO also collected data for two research projects: [a] 'Mental health in healthcare students' which assessed mental health and well-being among medical, physiotherapy and pharmacy students; and [b] a cultural diversity survey that captured the attitudes and behaviours of senior medical students in a multicultural environment.

During this reporting period the QEO has started managing the data collection for the experiential learning component of the Pharmacy programmes on behalf of the Affiliation for Pharmacy Practice Experiential Learning (APPEL). This affiliation was established by the three schools of pharmacy – Trinity College Dublin, University College Cork and RCSI – to manage student placements in the new five-year integrated Masters in Pharmacy (M.Pharm.) programmes offered by the schools. The QEO surveys students of all these schools and their supervisors at the end of the placement and reports the findings back to APPEL. Thus far only two surveys have been carried out per school (one of students and one of supervisors), but the volume of surveys will increase substantially as students progress through their degree programme.

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

The RCSI Quality Committee (QC) keeps the Internal QA Reviews Calendar under constant review and aims to have Internal QA Review time-lines confirmed for a three-year period from the date of each QC meeting and agreed in principle for the next four years. As noted above, changes in PRSB or overseas accreditation body schedules can impact on the calendar. Additionally, given the small size of RCSI as an academic institution, major projects undertaken by a School of other unit can divert 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.

The Quality Enhancement Office manages survey data collection in RCSI centrally and has been successful in maintaining substantial response rates (above 50% for student satisfaction surveys) despite the increasing demand for surveys year on year. Overall in the academic year 2014-2015 the QEO conducted 198 surveys out of which 159 were student surveys. The following year (2015-2016) the total number of surveys increased to 289 including 182 student surveys. The total number of surveys for this reporting period (September 2016 – August 2017) was 225 out of which 162 were student surveys. The priority of the QEO in relation to surveys is to manage the overall number of surveys to which the students are exposed to avoid falling response rates due to ‘survey fatigue’; this is increasingly difficult.

**3.3 A description of other implementation issues.**

The RCSI Quality Committee and Quality Enhancement Office are committed to substantive student involvement in Internal QA Review processes, in particular through membership of Peer Review Groups (PRGs). Unfortunately, the fact that the RCSI Students’ Union (SU) Officer posts are not sabbatical in nature means that the Officers must manage their SU commitments in parallel with their course work. Student representatives are quite strategic in choosing which meetings and initiatives to involve themselves in and, as a result, it has proven difficult to recruit student members to join PRGs. However, students are involved in the governance of RCSI quality assurance policies & procedures through SU representation on the Quality Committee and on the governing boards to which it reports.

## 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.

Implementation of the Internal QA Reviews procedures is progressing well with two of the four parallel review Cycles nearing completion and the fourth commencing.

A longitudinal analysis of Peer Review Group reports, their commendations and recommendation in the period 2011 – 2016 was carried out during Q1 of 2017. The most commonly occurring themes among PRG recommendations are in the areas of Staff Development; Unit Operations; Strategic Planning; Student Records Management System & Registry function; and Organisational Structure & Governance. It is encouraging that the broad themes identified correspond to priority areas and actions identified in the RCSI Strategic Plan 2013-2017. For example, elements of the themes concerning Registry, Staff Development and Organisational Structure & Governance are already at an advanced stage of implementation by RCSI. Those recommendations addressed specifically to RCSI (rather than to the unit under review) cover a wide range of themes and reflect the journey that the institution has made towards maturity as a university-level health sciences higher education institution. Again, a number of these recommendations correspond to actions identified in the RCSI Strategic Plan 2013-2017. An analysis of the frequency distribution of PRG commendations and recommendations across the areas covered by the SAR templates can be useful also in giving an overview of areas of excellence and areas in need of improvement. However, their interpretation is complicated by a number of factors including the propensity of individual PRGs to make commendations & recommendations, and the context & circumstances of individual Units at the time of review. The recommendations arising from reviews of academic units show a concentrations of recommendations in the areas of Organisation & Management and Staff & Facilities – this reflects a shared need to build and/or optimise internal management structures to support the unit Heads in their leadership roles and to redistribute staff workloads to provide opportunities for greater involvement in research and administrative roles. The recommendations arising from reviews of administrative/service units show a more even distribution across SAR areas. The key theme emerging from the first cycle of reviews of RCSI transnational programmes and branch campuses is the importance of ongoing monitoring, both of new and established programmes and campuses.

## **2. Impact**

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

The longitudinal analysis of Peer Review Group reports (2011 – 2016) identified a time sequence of recommendations and commendations which reflect the journey that RCSI has made towards maturity as a university-level health sciences higher education institution. In particular, these relate to the implementation of recommendations to build and optimise internal management structures to support unit Heads. For example, the post of ‘Academic Quality & Operations Manager’ was created within the School of Pharmacy to provide additional, dedicated capacity to manage the extensive range of accreditation and quality assurance processes involving the School.

A similar longitudinal analysis of student satisfaction indices was carried out to identify major themes and time trends. The results of this analysis, together with recommendations arising from the thematic review of implementation of the RCSI Strategic Plan 2013-2017, have fed substantially into the ‘Transformative Learning Experience’ pillar of the new Strategic Plan which is in development to cover the period 2018-2022.

## **3. Themes**

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

The key themes emerging from reviews conducted during the reporting period are:

- [1] the primacy of an excellent student experience in terms of curriculum content, flexible learning paths, experiential learning and an excellent learning environment; and
- [2] the value of regular monitoring (especially through QA review processes) of transnational education (TNE) provision and of overseas branch campuses, both to accreditation by PRSBs and to ensuring that TNE programmes in ‘start-up’ phase are appropriately resourced and managed.

## 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.

During this reporting period, and following publication of the QQI Report of the Expert Panel on the Quality Assurance of Research Degree Programmes in Irish Higher Education Institutions, the School of Postgraduate Studies completed an exercise to benchmark all of its policies and procedures against the Panel recommendations and to update them accordingly.

The Student, Academic & Regulatory Affairs Department (SARA; registry) completed a review of transnational delivery of the RCSI medical degree programme under the headings: Exam Development & Execution; Curriculum Cohesion; Convergence & Minimising Difference; Closing the Loop and Systems and Technology.

In addition, SARA carried out a review of the role and function of external examiners considering: Current improvements in the External Examining systems across the Higher Education sector in Ireland and the UK; The strategic importance of external examiner relationships and externally validated benchmarks; Operating in a transnational context; New innovative programmes and programmatic structures; Feedback from both Faculty experiences of external examining systems elsewhere and from appointed external examiners.

RCSI launched a new Post-PhD Researcher Career and Development Framework which is aligned to the European Commission European Charter for Researchers, Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers and is closely modelled on the EU framework.

An on-line Cultural Competence training resource was made available to both students and staff which focuses on developing shared attitudes and behaviours in cross cultural situations, to enable both staff and students to have an understanding and acceptance of people from different cultures and to work skilfully with them.

Also, as noted above, a number of changes were made to internal QA procedures arising from feedback received from Peer Review Groups:

[1] Benchmarking was introduced as a component of the Self Evaluation Phase of internal QA review to allow units undergoing review to compare their policies and procedures against a comparator unit elsewhere. A sum of money is made available from the QEO budget to facilitate this process;

- [2] A mid-cycle review of implementation of Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) arising from QA reviews was introduced whereby updated QIPs are requested from units that underwent review 3-4 years previously (i.e. approximately mid-cycle) for evaluation by the Quality Committee and by Medicine & Health Sciences Board or Surgery & Postgraduate Faculties Board as appropriate;
- [3] Arising from feedback from Peer Review Groups (PRGs), a technical writer is employed on a sessional basis to support PRGs during their site-visits;
- [4] In addition to regular reports to the relevant governing boards, a formal annual report will be presented to each board by the Director of Quality Enhancement.

#### **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.

A highlight of QA activities was the thematic review carried out during the reporting period examining implementation of the RCSI Strategic Plan 2013-2017 'Growth & Excellence'. This review, carried out by a seven-member international Review Panel (6 external & 1 internal members), examined a significant volume of documentation and conducted a three-day site-visit to RCSI during which they met with a large number of stakeholders (students, staff and external representatives). The wide-ranging recommendations of the Review Panel have proven to be of great value to RCSI in the ongoing process to develop a new Strategic Plan to cover the period 2018-2022.

## 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.

The key initiatives planned for the next reporting period are:

- [1] Launch of the new RCSI Strategic Plan 2018-2022 with Quality as one of three strategic foundations;
- [2] Development and implementation of a new over-arching RCSI Quality Framework;
- [3] Benchmarking all QA frameworks, policies & procedures to QQI Core Statutory QA Guidelines;
- [4] A major Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Staff Survey to inform an application for the Athena-SWAN Bronze Award;
- [5] Commencement of the second Cycles of Reviews of Schools within the Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences, and of Overseas Branch Campuses

### 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 Postgraduate Studies

Internal QA Reviews of Administrative/Support Units  
Conference & Events Office  
REACH (Community Engagement) Office

Internal QA Reviews of Overseas Branch Campuses  
RCSI-Bahrain

### **5.3 Other Plans**

The RCSI Athena-SWAN Self Assessment Team (SAT) will continue its work following an unsuccessful Bronze Award application during 2016-2017 in preparation for a fresh application during Q1-Q2 of 2018.

## 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.

The previous QQI Institutional Review process (2013-2014) provided RCSI with an excellent opportunity to evaluate its development as it matures as a university-level health sciences higher education institution, and the Action Plan arising from the recommendations of the Review Panel have played a significant role in guiding strategy and operational initiatives over the intervening 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.

The formal QA structures, policies and procedures adopted by RCSI in 2010 have had a significant impact since their inception. The internal QA review process has 'bedded down' well within the institution and there is widespread recognition of the value of the review process to units that go through it. RCSI-Bahrain, the largest and longest established overseas branch campus of RCSI, has developed its own internal QA procedures and now runs an internal QA review system in parallel to that operating in Dublin. QA reviews have also proven their value to RCSI in contributing to PRSB accreditation processes and as key monitoring tools for transnational education provision.

### **6.3 Themes**

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

During 2016-2017 RCSI instituted a new developmental theme/work-stream, coordinated by the Quality Enhancement Office, to assure the quality of experiential learning as a key component of RCSI undergraduate, postgraduate and professional education and training programmes in the health professions. Commencing with the Department of Surgical Affairs (responsible for postgraduate training & certification in surgery in Ireland) and more recently the Irish Institute of Pharmacy (responsible for continuing professional developments of Pharmacists in Ireland), this involves periodic surveys of trainees and trainers before and after each training rotation or course. Analysis and reporting of the survey data provides a key evidence base in evaluating the trainee experience and other aspects of the process. Over the period leading up to the CINNTE Institutional Review of RCSI in 2022, this programme will be expanded to encompass experiential learning by students in all RCSI undergraduate programmes and campuses.