

Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland

2022

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**Annual Quality Report**  
**Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland**  
**Reporting Period 2020-2021**

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**Annual Quality Report**  
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**PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM**  
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## PREFACE

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

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

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

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

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## Guidelines on Completing the Report

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

### Submission Process and Timeline

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

### Completing the AQR

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

### Report Structure

#### Part A: Internal QA System

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

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

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

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

#### Case Studies

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

## Links to Reference Documents Cited in this Template<sup>1</sup>

### Legislation

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

### QQI Documents

#### Statutory QA Guidelines (QAG)

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

#### Other QQI Policy Documents

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

### Other National/International References

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

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<sup>1</sup> These links will be updated as further guidance documents are published.

## PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Table 1

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

## Introduction and Overview of Institution

This is the AQR for **The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland** for the reporting period **1 September 2020 - 31 August 2021**.

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

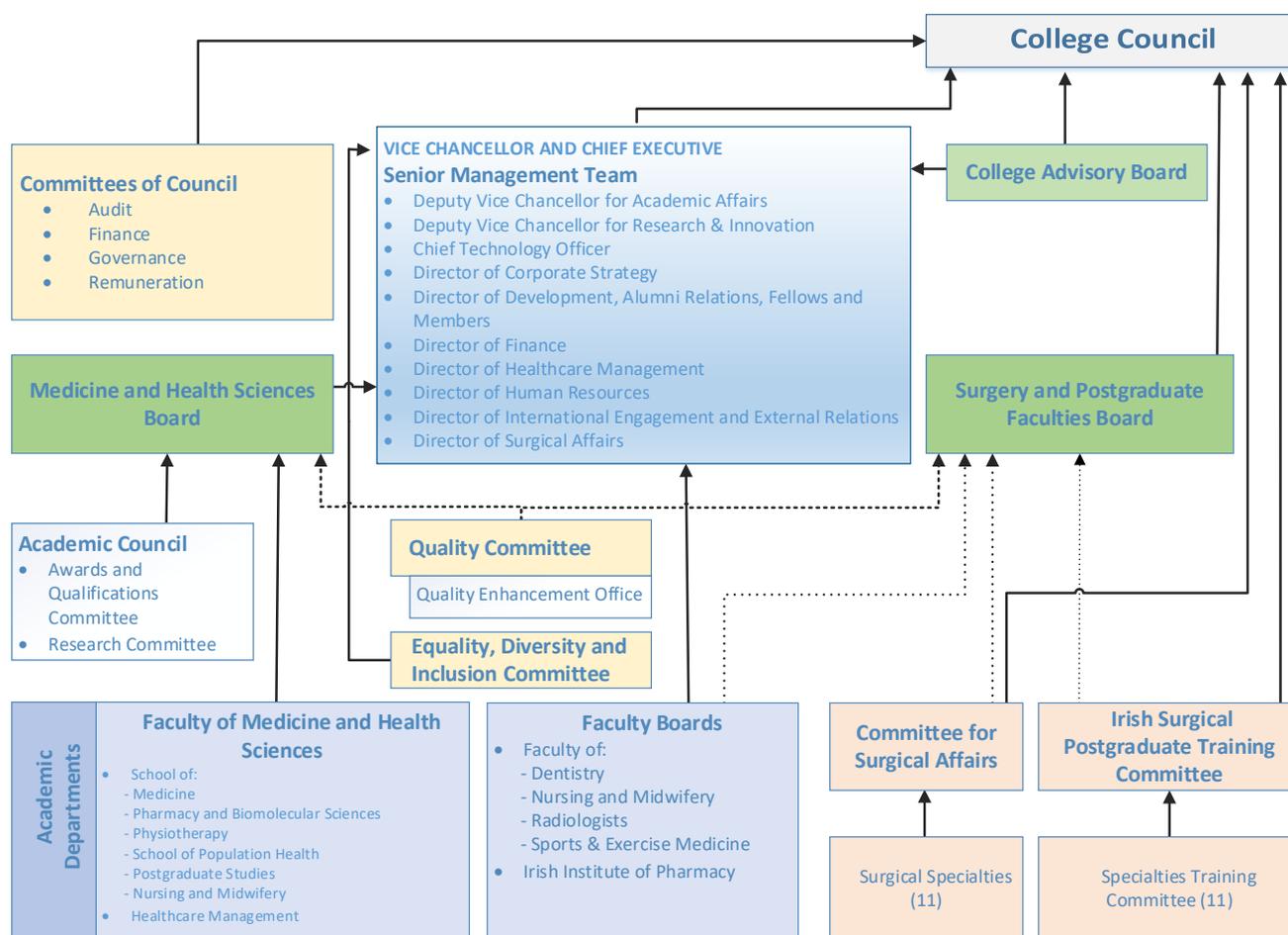
The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) was established by Royal Charter in 1784 to set and support professional standards for surgical training and practice in Ireland. RCSI has evolved considerably in the intervening years and is now both a health sciences university and a postgraduate training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

The Annual Quality Report was prepared by the Quality Enhancement Office in consultation with Faculties, Schools and Professional Services Units across the University, prior to consideration and approval by RCSI Senior Management and the Quality Committee.

# 1.0 Internal QA Framework

## 1.1 Governance and Management of Quality

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



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

The RCSI Quality Committee (QC) is responsible for the creation of policy and for the implementation of quality processes and quality assurance/quality improvement (QA/QI) activities across academic and administrative areas of all RCSI campuses. The Quality Committee (QC) reports both to MHSB and to SPFB. The QC has two

standing sub-committees reporting to it, the Academic Integrity Working Group (AIWG) and the Institutional Review Working Group (IRWG). The AIWG is a formal structure to allow RCSI to monitor and respond to initiatives launched by the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) and by QQI in the area of Academic Integrity. The IRWG is responsible for the management of Institutional Reviews conducted by QQI. The QC also plays a significant role in integrating QA activities on overseas branch campuses into the overall QA system, and in supporting these campuses in their interactions with local QA/QI structures and processes. Each branch campus has a local Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) which reports to the QC, and the Chair of each QAC is a member of the QC. Local Quality Officers facilitate the work of each QAC and liaise with the Quality Enhancement Office (QEO; Dublin) on an ongoing basis.

The QEO is the executive function of the RCSI Quality Committee (QC) and of its sub-committees, and reports to the Vice Chancellor & CEO of RCSI. The role of the QEO is to support the implementation of the RCSI QA/QI strategy by coordinating all relevant activities and by collecting the data needed to allow the QC to quality assure all aspects of programme delivery. The QEO had three members of staff from its inception: Director, Associate Director and Quality Reviews Manager. The Director and staff of the QEO were appointed in September-October 2010 by open competition (open external competition in the case of the Director), and dedicated office accommodation was provided in December 2010. A fourth member of staff, in the role of QA/QI Analyst, was appointed in March 2015. In 2017 the Associate Director was appointed as Director of Psychometrics (in the rank of Associate Professor) within the QEO. The Director reports to the Chair of the Quality Committee, the Vice Chancellor & CEO of RCSI. Since the reporting period, the Director of the QEO has retired and a new Head of the QEO has been appointed; further details will be provided in the next AQR.

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

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

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

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

- Representatives of the public interest on governing boards and advisory committees (including RCSI Council, Medicine & Health Sciences Board, Surgery & Postgraduate Faculties Board, College Board, Quality Committee, Academic Council, etc.)
- External members of Peer Review Groups in Internal Quality Assurance Reviews
- External members of Programmatic Review Panels (appointed jointly by RCSI & NUI)
- External Examiners for educational programmes leading to the award of degrees (appointed jointly by RCSI & NUI)

- External members of Accreditation Panels visiting RCSI on behalf of the Professional Regulatory Statutory Bodies (Irish Medical Council, Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland, CORU, etc.)

Our students are key stakeholders in quality assurance and at all levels of RCSI internal governance. The Presidents of both Students' Unions are members of the Quality Committee, and Students' Union Officers and Class Representatives are members of internal governance committees up to and including the Medicine & Health Sciences Board. In addition, the views of students are invited through the student feedback processes described below. RCSI also engages with staff as stakeholders through periodic Staff Surveys, which are administered and processed by the QEO in the same way as the student surveys. Where input from other external stakeholders is required, for example as part of the internal review process for Professional Services Units, this process is facilitated by the QEO in terms of targeted surveys and, occasionally, formal or informal focus groups.

RCSI is committed to carrying out research to the highest standards of professionalism and scientific rigour and, to that end, has developed a comprehensive suite of policies and procedures governing research activity and its quality assurance developed by the Office of Research & Innovation (ORI) and the School of Postgraduate Studies (SPGS). The University's approach aligns with the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (which specifies four fundamental principles that underpin all research integrity and good practice), with the National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland and with Ireland's Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes (QOI). 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 manages all research programmes leading to higher degree awards. The SPGS Committee is responsible for overall governance and management of the School. The Postgraduate Programme Management Committee, which has responsibility for policy oversight and engagement with the academic directors of all taught postgraduate programmes in RCSI, and the Academic Review Committee (ARC), which reviews all new applications for research degrees and ensures efficient and timely registration of new students with quality research proposals, both report to the SPGS Committee. The RCSI Awards and Qualifications Committee (A&QC) has responsibility, with authority delegated by MHSB, for the validation, revalidation and review of all programmes leading to degree awards of RCSI. As such it maintains oversight of all postgraduate programmes (taught and by research), considering new programme proposals and any changes required to existing programmes. A&QC also undertakes rolling Programmatic Reviews. Within SPGS, the PhD programme was reviewed in 2012 and the MD programme was reviewed in 2018. The Quality Enhancement Office (QEO) also carries out reviews of Schools, Faculties and Professional Services Units within RCSI.

## 1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision

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

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

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

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

## 2.0 Programme Development and Delivery

### 2.1 Programme Development and Approval

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

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

For new RCSI programmes leading to degree awards, the process administered by the A&QC involves two stages: [1] establishment of a Business Case and [2] development of an Academic Proposal. Once a Business Case for a new programme has been submitted, it is reviewed internally by the A&QC Business Case Review Panel and feedback is given to the proposer. If/when the final Business Case has been approved by A&QC, a recommendation is made to the RCSI Senior Management Team which, if approved, will permit the proposer to progress to the second stage. The Academic Proposal is subject initially to internal review by the A&QC Academic Case Review Panel in an iterative process that leads to the application going forward to the Academic Council and thence to Medicine & Health Sciences Board (MHSB). Once all proposed modifications have been applied to the programme proposal, the application is presented for RCSI approval to Medicine & Health Sciences Board (MHSB). The programme proposal is also subject to external review by a NUI appointed external assessor. Following a similar review process, the application is presented for NUI approval to NUI Senate.

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

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

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

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

## 2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification

The 'Study at RCSI' section of the RCSI [website](#) 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 (where relevant), log-in details for RCSI online services, including the Virtual Learning Environment (Moodle) and RCSI email account details are also distributed. RCSI offers first year undergraduate students with a formal induction programme which comprises a series of lectures and workshops on assorted topics including study skills, self-care, support services, etc.

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

Progression is determined by 'Marks and Standards' documents which are created and published for each year of each programme. These documents outline the standards and criteria which must be satisfied in order to progress to the next stage of the programme. These are made available to students via the Moodle virtual learning environment, together with policies on the relevant appeals processes. 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 RCSI Registry part of Student, Academic & Regulatory Affairs office (SARA) and by Year/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 Student Gateway or email) as soon as is practicable following the relevant Examinations Board meeting. At the end of each

academic year, students are sent a Transcript of their results. These transcripts provide a full breakdown of all major summative and professional examinations taken by that student that year.

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

## 2.3 Procedures for Making Awards

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

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

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

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

Assessment is another core element of any curriculum, providing mechanisms (which are appropriate and fit for purpose) to allow students to demonstrate their attainment of the learning outcomes. The development of RCSI curricula involves the elaboration of a system of assessments which, at each stage of the programme, permits

representative and relevant sampling of the students' knowledge, skills and attitudes as required by the learning outcomes. The assessment system must [a] demonstrate mapping of each assessment to the relevant learning outcomes, [b] involve as wide a variety of assessment types as possible to encompass the scope of the curriculum and [c] specify how the relative weightings of content within assessments correspond to the learning outcomes. The key principle is that of Constructive Alignment between learning outcomes, teaching & learning activities and assessment. The tool used to demonstrate this is Assessment Blueprinting, which links assessment type, relative weighting of content within assessments and learning outcomes. Assessment blueprints are developed at module-and programme-level to demonstrate appropriate alignment across the programme.

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

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

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

## 2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

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

- i. Student feedback surveys (semester-based or, exceptionally, more frequent)
- ii. In-course examination results (semester- or academic year-based)
- iii. Exit (*i.e.*, final end of programme) examination results
- iv. External examiners' reports
- v. Accreditation reports issued by the relevant Postgraduate Regulatory Statutory Bodies
- vi. Annual Programme Monitoring
- vii. Programmatic Review reports

Student feedback surveys run by the Quality Enhancement Office provide an overview of perceptions of the student experience, particularly in relation to teaching, learning & assessment. RCSI survey 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 vital role played by the QEO ensures that the data is collected, processed and reported in a consistent way that allows for an in-depth analysis and also protects the confidentiality of students' views. The QEO provides

feedback reports for each year of each programme twice a year (at the end of each semester) or once a year (at the end of semester 2), determined by whether or not the content is delivered by discrete semesters. Cycle/Programme Directors use this information in conjunction with academic performance data to determine what (if any) changes need to be made for the subsequent year. This information should be communicated back to the students by the Schools at the start of the next academic year in the form of a Quality Improvement Plan either verbally (during one of the first lectures of the year) or via the Moodle virtual learning environment. The quantitative survey response data are made available directly to students via Moodle shortly after the data have been processed. In addition to the curriculum feedback, a set of separate reports is prepared for the heads of professional services functions – for example the RCSI Library, Student Academic and Regulatory Affairs, IT Department etc. Externally, feedback on student engagement is collected independently from first and final year undergraduate students and from postgraduate research students via [StudentSurvey.ie](https://www.student-survey.ie). This nationwide survey aims to measure student engagement in all participating third level institutions and allows individual institutions to benchmark against the rest of the sector. This process is facilitated and reported by the Quality Enhancement Office.

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

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

As a health sciences university and postgraduate/professional training body, many RCSI educational and training programmes are subject to accreditation by the relevant Professional Regulatory and Statutory Bodies (PRSBs). These are the Irish Medical Council, the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland, CORU [The Health & Social Care Professions Regulator], the Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists and the Nursing & Midwifery Board of Ireland. Each PRSB undertakes periodic monitoring and accreditation site-inspections to RCSI to assess compliance of the relevant degree or professional training programme with their accreditation standards. The

reports arising from these site-inspections provide a valuable external perspective on the status of programmes and include useful recommendations for quality enhancement.

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

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

RCSI, through the programmes offered by the [Health Professions Education Centre \(HPEC\)](#), endeavours to ensure that all academic staff are actively engaged in the quality assurance and enhancement of their own teaching and assessment activities. Peer observation of teaching is an integral component to educator development at RCSI. HPEC leads the RCSI's active and collaborative peer observation programme, which was established in 2013. HPEC also offers RCSI staff members exclusive access to a formal educational qualification through a Postgraduate Diploma in Health Professions Education. This is a one-year, Level 9, 60-credit course which covers four modules: Introduction to Health Professions Education; Principles of Learning and Teaching; Assessment and Feedback in Health Professions Education and Curriculum Design and Evaluation. 239 staff have been awarded a Postgraduate Diploma in Health Professions Education and an additional 20 staff have been awarded postgraduate certificates.

RCSI, as a University of medicine and health sciences and surgical Royal College, espouses the highest standards of professionalism among students, graduates, postgraduate trainees, Members and Fellows. Academic Integrity – showing respect for the work of others and acting with honesty and responsibility in preparing and submitting coursework – is a key component of professionalism. SARA/Registry, working with the Schools, Faculties and the Academic Integrity Working Group, maintain a comprehensive suite of documents setting out RCSI policy concerning professionalism, code of conduct, behaviour in examinations, plagiarism, etc. In addition, an RCSI Academic Working Group was established in September 2020 as formal structure to monitor and respond to initiatives launched by National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) and Quality & Qualifications Ireland (QQI) in the area of Academic Integrity. The working group is a sub Committee of the Quality Committee, thus giving it reporting lines to both Medicine & Health Sciences Board and Surgery and Postgraduate Faculties Board.

### 3.0 Learner Resources and Support

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

The RCSI Dublin city centre campus received a major enhancement during 2017 through the completion of 26 York Street, a new state-of-the-art facility over 10 floors (six above ground & four below) which provides students, surgical trainees and staff with modern cutting-edge facilities that will promote the development of the RCSI community at the heart of the city. As well as being the home of the new National Surgical & Clinical Training Centre, 26 York Street also includes a 540-seat auditorium, the RCSI library, 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 Centre for Simulation Education & Research, 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. 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.

RCSI Library dates from the inception of RCSI as a surgical Royal College in 1784. It was only with the appointment of the first qualified librarian in 1986 that the recognisable modern-day academic library services began on the main St Stephen's Green campus. These were extended to RCSI's main teaching hospital in 1988 when RCSI Library, Beaumont Hospital opened. A purpose-built, state of the art library, opened in the Mercer building in 1991 and served as the main campus library until 2017 when the library team, with the exception of the Heritage Collections team who remain in situ, relocated to the new academic education building at 26 York Street. This new facility spans three floors and provides 500 study spaces. Online library services and resources began around 2005 and were greatly expanded from 2008. Today 85% of interactions with library services are online and the working physical collections on the main campus are less than 300 linear metres. In recent years, and like many other libraries, RCSI Library, has restructured away from a focus on collections, physical spaces and internally facing library functional roles towards a focus on expertise, the provision of expert information services and externally facing specialist roles that enable and align with university core activities and strategies for education, research, reputation, engagement and clinical practice. RCSI Library, including RCSI Library Beaumont Hospital, serves all registered RCSI students including trainees & interns, RCSI academic, research, clinical and professional services staff including honorary and clinical lecturer appointments, alumni, exam candidates and others and those visiting through the reciprocal library access schemes ALCID or SCONUL Access. The service is responsible for providing the resources and services to support current education, research and clinical activities and for the long-term preservation and curation of outputs and records related to those activities (see summary diagram below).

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

In recent years the healthcare professions have adopted simulation-based training as an effective way to enable students and postgraduate trainees to undertake the deliberate practice of clinical skills in a safe learning environment, and so to achieve the highest standards before they work directly with patients. One of the key ambitions of RCSI in designing the new 26 York Street building was to provide the facilities and supports necessary for state-of-the-art clinical simulation. The Clinical Simulation Suite and the associated Centre for Simulation Education & Research (RCSI SIM) span three floors of the building (12,000 sq. ft.) and incorporate:

- Ten outpatient consultation rooms where simulated patients (professional actors & lay volunteers who have undertaken specific in-house training) assist in developing students' consultation skills.
- Eight hospital ward simulation rooms, which use high-fidelity manikins to develop students' clinical skills, as well as to build their confidence in dealing with emergency situations, such as complications during labour.
- A task training laboratory with a full range of teaching models, manikins and task trainers (needle biopsy, insertion of IV lines, etc.).
- A large, fully-equipped and multi-purpose 'wet-lab' accommodating up to 30 students or professional trainees.
- A large Surgical Simulator Suite accommodating 20 trainees with an array of state-of-the-art augmented reality simulators.
- A mock operating room, designed for inter-professional team training and non-technical skills (human factors) training with a separate control room and viewing/debrief room.

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

RCSI has a longstanding history of supporting students through the provision of modern technology to facilitate learning. All students have access to the full Microsoft suite of services, including OneDrive cloud storage, email, Office 365 applications and Teams online meetings. When students start with RCSI, digital training is provided through drop-in sessions with IT, online videos, and presentations on IT Support services. All undergraduate

students are provided with laptops, to ensure that they are digitally equipped both while studying online and when on clinical placements. An extensive range of applications are provided by RCSI to support learning and students including:

- Moodle: This virtual learning environment provides students with access to their timetable, course material, online lectures, and access to professional services support including Registry, Academic Affairs, library and IT.
- Blackboard Collaborate: Online lectures and tutorials are managed on blackboard collaborate.
- TurningPoint: This service allows students to interact during lectures, e.g., polls, quizzes.
- Library: A vast range of online services are available to students, including a substantial catalogue of journals and databases.
- MyRCSI: A student app developed in collaboration with the Students Union that signposts students to all their digital services from one central location.
- Exemplify: Online exam system introduced in 2020.
- CareerHub: A portal supporting career management.
- Electives: Enables students apply for clinical electives.
- Mentor Network: Enables students to connect to alumni mentors across the world.
- Student HQ: A new online hub for students Clubs and Societies to enable them manage their organisations and hold events online.

RCSI works constantly to improve and expand digital service provision to students and staff. Projects currently in development include solutions to improve student clinical placement and ePortfolio management.

RCSI's Centre for Mastery Personal, Professional & Academic Success (CoMPPAS) provides a comprehensive pastoral care support framework to all students, while the Student Services Department assists with accommodation, immigration & visa issues, bank accounts, Clubs & Societies, etc. RCSI has a diverse student body and the specific pastoral care needs of international students substantially represent the mainstream concern of the University and the focus of pastoral and academic support service provision. As such, services have been designed to fully integrate those needs as core to the provision of services.

CoMPPAS is an integrated multi-disciplinary team of professionals and specialists providing a holistic support framework designed to support an empower students to achieve their personal, professional and academic goals. The range of professional services offered include Student Welfare & Wellbeing, Career Readiness, Learning Access & Facilitation (Disability), Academic Performance and Communication & Language. The welfare team is staffed by three CORU registered social workers who function as the College student welfare officers. RCSI also engages a number of independent third-party services: the RCSI Counselling Service which comprises a panel of 23 registered counsellors; the Mercer's Medical Centre GP Service; the RCSI Acute Psychiatric support service provided by external consultant psychiatrists. The CoMPPAS Student Assistance Programme provides 24hr/365 day access to resources out of hours and, where necessary, emergency face to face or telephonic counselling anywhere in Ireland or abroad.

The Student Services Office coordinates all other student support services. Here students have access to information and support in relation to: Accommodation, Financial Assistance, Gym, Immigration & Visa information, Induction & Orientation, Meet & Greet Service, Merchandising, Societies, Sports Clubs & Teams, Student Awards, Student Events, Student Facilities and Student Life Bursaries.

RCSI provides a comprehensive undergraduate point of entry induction and orientation programme for all new students during the first 6 weeks of each semester of their first year at RCSI. An adapted programme is provided to graduate entry students in line with their prior experience of higher education. In addition, at registration, all undergraduate students are assigned an Academic Mentor/Personal Tutor. As an international student community, a significant value is placed on intercultural competence and the celebration of RCSI's cultural diversity. This includes specific input on intercultural awareness and communication to all students, as well as

completion of an online module in the first weeks on the programme. The month of March each year is dedicated to celebrating our cultural diversity and includes several student-led landmark events such as an annual Cultural Diversity Exhibition, International Food Night and International Night, a show that celebrates the rich tapestry of music, dance and traditions that make up the RCSI community. An extensive range of clubs, societies and volunteering opportunities further promote and celebrate the diversity of the University.

The RCSI learning experience, by virtue of the student profile, requires full integration between students of all cultural backgrounds across all learning activities. As part of the induction programme, the CoMPPAS team run a number of large-scale friendship lunches to assist in student socialisation. Additionally, a comprehensive Peer to Peer mentoring programme makes immediately available 'near peer' support for students new to Dublin and Ireland. In addition to learning from the experiences of peers, a comprehensive programme of student club and society activities and events each year is actively supported and promoted by Student Services. Out of respect for certain cultural and religious norms, gender-specific Islamic prayer rooms and an optional female-only gym are available on campus for students of all backgrounds who wish to avail of them. RCSI encourages international students to participate and integrate also through a range of activities both specially created within RCSI and those available nationally, e.g. RCSI REACH; RCSI International Citizenship Programme; Student Ambassador Programme. RCSI's International Citizenship award is a longitudinal programme which encourages students to reflect on and develop the skills, values and attitudes that they will need to work effectively in a culturally diverse healthcare environment. The programme leads to an award for those students who show an 'international outlook' through demonstration of personal development and learning from their interactions with others from diverse backgrounds during extra-curricular activities.

RCSI is dedicated to enhancing the communication skills all of its international learners including its non-native speaking student population. The educational approach taken, due to our diverse student body & their needs, is best achieved through holistic and embedded means with some additional learning facilities provided where required. This is achieved through a variety of avenues both inside the curriculum (e.g. as part of the undergraduate Professionalism (PPID) vertical & clinical skills teaching module) and as a co-curricular or as additional learning provision where required. Communication skills development for the international student body is now also provided for, through a learning tool in a self-access format, in a dedicated communication and language lab space in our library building. Ongoing development and management of technology-based, language and communication resources and laboratory learning environments is achieved through guidance from our dedicated Lecturer in Communications who guides the use of this space. The University's dedicated communication and language self-access learning centre can be used only by those learners who are referred to it under advice from both the CoMPPAS team working in consultation with the lecturer in Communications. This language learning self-access laboratory is housed at No 26 York Street for any international learners who may have additional language learning needs. This is both a physical and virtual space which provides flexible language learning tools and a dedicated learning space for non-native speaking students of RCSI. RCSI CoMPPAS is the service through which learners wishing to access the language self-access learning facilities can be initially identified and directed.

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

a 'Navigate to Graduate' student guide. The Postgraduate Students' Union has an international officer to ensure that RCSI is always aware of international scholar's needs.

RCSI places a particular emphasis on the provision of supports to students on Blended Learning programmes offered by the University. At present, these are mainly delivered by the [Graduate School of Healthcare Management](#) and [RCSI Dubai](#). Student orientation is crucial to the onboarding process for these programmes, and the orientation programme is designed to prepare students for their learning journey and to ensure a quality and engaged student experience. The onboarding process ensures that students can understand the context and requirements of the face-to-face and online components of the programme, can access the virtual learning environment and virtual classrooms and have completed all necessary IT training. Students are guided through the initial access and use of the software required to engage with the programme. Regular facilitated Virtual Drop-In Sessions are scheduled for both students and adjunct faculty to encourage them to visit the virtual classrooms and to test accessibility and audio settings in advance of teaching sessions, and technical support is provided on an ongoing basis. From the outset, students have access to the programme schedule including study days, online sessions, workshops, and assignment submission dates and are informed in a timely manner of any changes that need to be made. They are also made aware of the key contacts and persons available to them during their academic journey including the Programme Director, Module Leaders and Programme Coordinator and of the areas and issues with which these individuals can provide assistance and support. Students are given clear and comprehensive instructions on all aspects of each assessment component, including the method of assessment, weighting of each component, assessment rubrics, instructions on submission and information on the required file formats and the number of attempts allowed for each assessment component. Students receive timely feedback on their assessment submissions in order to inform constructive feedback and guidance, and to afford them an opportunity to develop their academic performance.

## 4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes

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

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

RCSI research postgraduate degree programmes [MSc, MCh, MD & PhD] are structured programmes. Thus, while each research group will teach their students the specific research skills required for their bespoke projects, this is underpinned by an array of compulsory core modules. For example, Research Ethics & Integrity, Research Methodology, Time Management, Project Management, Critical Analysis, Writing & Communication Skills, and Biostatistics (including data collection, management and analysis). Doctoral students on Centre-driven PhD programmes (e.g. SPHeRE & FutureNeuro) undertake defined, topic specific core modules in Year 1 in parallel with a rigorous thesis definition and fine-tuning exercise during their first year. Since 2015, all research students have access to optional modules on topics including: Applied Biomedical Imaging; Anatomical and Molecular Imaging; Medical Sciences; Cell Signalling & Molecular Medicine; Computational Biology; Data Management; Good Clinical Practice; Medical Device Research; Clinical Research Coordination & Management; Economic Evaluation based on Clinical Trials; Health Econometrics using Stata; Glioblastoma: Introduction to Brain Tumour Biology. In some Programmatic PhDs (e.g., SPHeRE), a full suite of programmes is provided to replace the generic set of core modules.

The SPGS also provides two Induction weeks per year (October & April) that provide research students with information about available supports and resources, including Nature Masterclasses, Vitae Resources and LinkedIn Learning.

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

- All student applications for research awards undergo rigorous review. Students are interviewed by the project supervisors and complete a Project Proposal form that is scrutinised by the Academic Review Committee. Peer reviewed projects are checked for candidate eligibility; evidence of statistical support during experimental design; evidence for research ethics application status and to ensure there are sufficient and appropriate resources to support successful completion of the project. Non-peer-reviewed or privately funded proposals are assessed in the same manner but additionally for the quality of the project proposal (general content, expected time required for completion, student support, probability of achieving publication standard). In the case of applicants for the RCSI Strategic Academic Recruitment Programme (StAR) MD and PhD programmes, applicants are interviewed also by a panel of academics selected by the SPGS.
- As noted previously, students must complete core modules to ensure they have the appropriate skills to complete their projects; they also have access to optional modules that can provide them with the skills that their particular project may require.

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

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

examined thesis is in line with the standards of theses that are submitted in their home university and in other universities in which they have examined.

The University has introduced PhD-by-Prior-Publication and MD-by-Prior-Publication submission routes which offer the opportunity to complete a level 10 award to those with a record of publications in biomedical, clinical, surgical and health services research. This route allows scholars who have sufficient research experience at doctoral level, as demonstrated through previously published material, to gain academic recognition for their work over a minimum registration period of one year. Researchers who have published their own original research, which examiners deem has made a significant contribution to knowledge, can obtain a PhD or MD award in recognition of this work when it is presented in the form of a coherent thesis and successfully assessed in a *viva voce* examination. To be eligible to submit for a PhD-by-Prior-Publication, the candidate must have published a minimum of five original research papers in journals ranked Q1 in their relevant fields in the ten years prior to the date of application for admission, and be senior author (first or last author) on all five research papers. To be eligible to submit for an MD-by-Prior-Publication, the candidate must have published a minimum of three original research papers in journals ranked Q1 or Q2 in their relevant fields in the ten years prior to the date of application for admission, and be senior author (first or last author) on all three date-based papers.

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

Ensuring the quality of the research environment and of the supervision provided to postgraduate research students is a key activity of SPGS. The ARC reviews projects to ensure that there is supervisory capacity for projects, as well as the appropriate laboratory and other resources to ensure successful completion of the project. Supervisor Training is provided to new supervisors once a year which outlines their responsibilities to the students they supervise and the supports available to supervisors. The RCSI Moodle Virtual Learning Environment has a dedicated area for resources for Supervisors, including a roadmap to onboard students, the set of relevant forms and policies that supervisors should be familiar with (including a Research Supervisor Charter), an online training course and guidelines on how to mentor students. RCSI also participates in the Research Supervisor Support & Development Programme (RSSDP), which is a series of workshops targeted at new, inexperienced research supervisors, and at more experienced staff who would like to refresh their knowledge on aspects of research supervisory practice. In 2020, the successful RSSDP collaboration between UCD, TCD and RCSI was extended to include the Karolinska Institute (Stockholm) and UNSW (Sydney, Australia). Each institution offers specific workshops or online supports that are open to partner institutions. These collaborative workshops address key, generic research supervisor challenges. In relation to ethical oversight of research within the University, the RCSI Research Ethics Committee 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.

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

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

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

## 5.0 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support

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

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

- **Role planning:** Upcoming roles are identified through retirement tracking, annual departmental business planning and workforce planning. These are largely highly specialised roles, where RCSI requires the ability to attract candidates nationally and internationally with the academic, research and leadership expertise required. The development of a candidate pool should commence a number of years in advance. This pipeline/ pool development process will be guided by an Academic Search Committee (ASC).
- **Recruitment approach:** The ASC will make decisions on advertising channels (newspapers, journals, websites etc.); sourcing channels (conferences etc.); use of an external search agency and whether support from the in-house International Talent Specialist is needed. The recruitment team will then meet with the most relevant internal stakeholders to identify details of the appropriate channels to advertise and market the posts.
- **Shortlisting:** The Dean leads the short-listing process for Professors and Associate Professors but may delegate this responsibility to the nominated Chair, or hiring lead, for Associate Professors or Academic Clinicians below Head of Department level and for other roles. All members of the interview panel must be invited to participate in the short-listing process to [a] ensure that fair and transparent decisions are reached, and [b] establish a number of quality candidates. In the absence of all members of the interview panel being available to participate in the shortlisting process, then, at a minimum, the Head of School and Head of Discipline, must be involved in the shortlisting process. The most highly ranked candidates are called for interview and the number called for interview should ideally reflect an applicant to appointment ratio of 5:1 (e.g., average of five candidates per position), for reasons of fairness and equity. Gender balance and diversity of applicants called for interview should also form part of the consideration.
- **Interviews:** For Head of Department roles RCSI requires a two-stage process - a pre-interview visit and a formal interview. There is a requirement for at least three academic staff to sit on the interview panel for all academic posts, ensuring gender balance and appropriate external expertise. Some posts may have a minimum requirement for four panel members – all with academic members as the majority. Additionally, time will be scheduled at the end of the interviews for the panel to discuss each candidate in detail and provide objective scoring. During this time, the panel should come to a mutual agreement on the outcome of the interviews. All interview notes and scoresheets will be collected by the HR Representative on the panel.
- **Reference checks & Offers:** Two references are required from the agreed candidate before an offer is made. RCSI requests proof of highest academic qualifications from all new & incoming academic staff. The referees must be people that the candidate reported into, relevant to the role and recent. A recruitment representative will contact the candidate to let them know that their references will be checked, and this will be completed by recruitment or another nominee. Details of the new employee's qualifications are stored on the Core HR system. When a new employee commences with RCSI their education details are input to Core HR by the HR team from details provided in their application and updated as necessary throughout their careers with RCSI. The parameters of the offer are agreed

between the relevant Senior Management Team (SMT) member and the Director of HR. Offers are made by the HR Director or a member of the HR team, who also handles any contract negotiations.

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

RCSI prioritises staff development in line with its overall philosophy of life-long learning. RCSI supports staff (in terms of fees and protected time) to participate in the Postgraduate Diploma in Health Professions Education offered by the Health Professions Education Centre. HPEC also offers a range of other educational inputs for staff including 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, through the annual Staff Development Scheme, RCSI offers a number of subsidised places to staff on a range of Level 8 and 9 programmes run by the Graduate School of Healthcare Management and other academic schools. Through this scheme staff can also apply for funding support to pursue doctoral studies in RCSI and academic qualifications in other HEIs. A wide range of developmental supports are offered through the Staff Learning and Development function within the HR team. These include short courses and workshops, leadership development programmes, bespoke team development sessions and 1:1 coaching and mentoring opportunities. These are advertised to all staff through the internal social media platform, Workvivo and through the staff portal and internal mailing lists. Annual training is provided to staff on General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), Cyber Security Awareness and Unconscious Bias. Additional training is also provided on Health and Safety Awareness and Handling Disclosures of Unwanted Sexual Incidents.

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.

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

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

stimulate further engagement such as joint research work, publications and reciprocal visits. Options for such staff include: Educator in Residence, Erasmus +, Fulbright Scholar, Adjunct and Visiting Staff Scheme and appointment as External Examiners on postgraduate programmes.

RCSI, through the Human Resources Department, provides a wide range of general development, pastoral care and welfare services to staff including health & wellbeing resources, supports for parents & carers and pension & retirement benefits.

## 6.0 Information and Data Management

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

Institutional Metrics are an essential information stream that 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 Insights & 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 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' Unions also have 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. The University introduced a new feedback mechanism, the 'Student Pulse Poll', to capture feedback on a more frequent basis in response to the rapid changes in student experience due to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020-21. This consisted of a short, 4-question survey conducted monthly to track changes in student experience.

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

Career paths of graduates, Members & Fellows:

Although, as a not-for-profit organisation, RCSI is not required to collect information for the HEA First Destination report, the University developed a new process for tracking students' career paths, during the reporting period. In addition, the Student, Academic & Regulatory Affairs (SARA) Office currently gathers ad-hoc information focusing mostly on graduates of the School of Medicine and their destinations of employment after graduation. The relationships with RCSI graduates, Members and Fellows are managed through the RCSI Alumni & Development Office; through this office, RCSI collects information about alumni workplaces and their clinical specialities. Previously a survey was conducted in order to build a more complete picture of alumni, gathering data from nearly 1000 alumni 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.

## 7.0 Public Information and Communication

Publication of Quality Assurance documents:

RCSI is committed to robust, transparent processes and procedures for ongoing quality assurance and quality enhancement of academic programmes, Schools, Faculties and Professional Support Units both in Ireland and overseas. In keeping with this, RCSI publishes Peer Review Group reports and Quality Improvement Plans arising from internal quality reviews. 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 publicly 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 publicly available on the RCSI website:

Learner Information:

Information on all programmes and awards is publicly 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 and Student Opportunities (clinical electives, student exchange, Erasmus & undergraduate research).

## 8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review

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. As noted above, the report produced by the review panel provides affirmation of positive aspects of the programme and offers recommendations for quality improvement. Programmatic Review panels are empowered to recommend a period of with quality improvement planning with follow-up or, in extremis, to recommend discontinuation of a degree programme.

### Programme Monitoring:

RCSI overseas 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 Assurance Reviews under policies and procedures which are aligned with guidance from Quality & Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. These reviews run in four parallel cycles:

- Internal Quality Assurance Reviews of Schools within the University of Medicine & Health Sciences;
- Internal QA Reviews of Postgraduate/Professional Faculties;
- Internal QA Reviews of Professional Services 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.

### 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.

## 9.0 Details of Arrangements with Third Parties

### 9.1 Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

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

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

2. Type of arrangement	PRSB
Name of body:	Medical Council of Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelors Degrees in Medicine, Surgery & Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO] RCSI Dublin; RCSI Bahrain; Perdana University-RCSI School of Medicine; RCSI UCD Malaysia Campus <a href="https://www.medicalcouncil.ie/education/career-stage-undergraduate/quality-assurance/medical-school-">https://www.medicalcouncil.ie/education/career-stage-undergraduate/quality-assurance/medical-school-</a>

	accreditation/accreditation-reports/medical-school-reports-2020.html Dates of last review: 04-06 Mar. 2019 (Dublin); 23 - 24 Mar. 2021 (Virtual Review) accreditation for five years from 17 November 2021 with a confirmatory site-visit scheduled Q4 2022 (Bahrain); 24 -25 Jan. 2018 (Perdana); 29-30 Jan. 2019 (RUMC) Dates of next review: 2024 (Dublin); 2026 (Bahrain); 2022 (Perdana); 2024 (RUMC)
Date of accreditation or last review	17/11/2021
Date of next review	

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

<b>4. Type of arrangement</b>	<b>PRSB</b>
Name of body:	Health & Social Care Professionals Council (CORU) Physiotherapists Registration Board
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelors Degree in Physiotherapy Site-visit 23-24 June 2021. Approval granted 28 September 2021 Date of next review 2026
Date of accreditation or last review	27/09/2021
Date of next review	

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

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

<b>6. Type of arrangement</b>	<b>PRSB</b>
Name of body:	Malaysian Medical Council
Programme titles and links to publications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perdana University-RCSI School of Medicine (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia); Bachelors Degrees in Medicine, Surgery &amp; Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO]</li> <li>• RCSI-UCD Malaysia Campus (Penang, Malaysia) - formerly Penang Medical College; Bachelors Degrees in Medicine, Surgery &amp; Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO]</li> </ul> Date of accreditation or last review: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perdana University-RCSI: 11-13 April 2016; Interim visit 9-10 October 2018</li> <li>• RCSI-UCD Malaysia Campus: Sept. 2018</li> </ul> Date of next review: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perdana University-RCSI: (date TBC) 1 year accreditation extension given to April 2022</li> <li>• RCSI-UCD Malaysia Campus: (date TBC)</li> </ul>
Date of accreditation or last review	09/10/2018
Date of next review	

<b>7. Type of arrangement</b>	<b>QA body</b>
Name of body:	Quality & Qualifications Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	Internal QA policies & procedures; all programmes of higher education and professional training
Date of accreditation or last review	20/10/2013
Date of next review	

<b>8. Type of arrangement</b>	<b>QA body</b>
Name of body:	Education & Training Quality Authority, Kingdom of Bahrain
Programme titles and links to publications	Internal QA policies & procedures; all programmes of higher education and professional training; institutional listing and placement and alignment of programmes to the Bahrain

	Qualifications Framework (NQF) Date of accreditation or last review: 2018 Institutional Accreditation 4-7 April 2021 programmatic review (virtual review) of BSc Nursing and MSc Nursing (draft reports received with full confidence in both programmes) successful programmatic reviews granted automatic revalidation on the NQF Bahrain Date of next review: 6-10 March 2022 programmatic review of Bachelors Degrees in Medicine, Surgery and Obstetrics (MB, BCh, BAO) 2023 Institutional Review 2027 Programmatic Reviews
Date of accreditation or last review	06/04/2021
Date of next review	

9. Type of arrangement	QA body
Name of body:	Higher Education Council, Kingdom of Bahrain
Programme titles and links to publications	Internal QA policies & procedures; all programmes of higher education and professional training; Institutional listing. Institutional Accreditation Visit 8-11th April 2018. Certificate granted 24th Feb 2019
Date of accreditation or last review	10/04/2018
Date of next review	

10. Type of arrangement	QA body
Name of body:	Malaysian Qualifications Agency (parallel QA processes with Malaysian Medical Council)
Programme titles and links to publications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perdana University-RCSI School of Medicine (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia); Bachelors Degrees in Medicine, Surgery &amp; Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO]</li> <li>• RCSI-UCD Malaysia Campus (Penang, Malaysia) - formerly Penang Medical College; Bachelors Degrees in Medicine, Surgery &amp; Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO]</li> </ul> Date of accreditation or last review: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perdana University-RCSI: 11-13 April 2016; Interim visit 9-10 October 2018</li> <li>• RCSI-UCD Malaysia Campus: Oct. 2018</li> </ul> Date of next review: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perdana University-RCSI: (date TBC) 1 year accreditation extension given to April 2022</li> <li>• RCSI-UCD Malaysia Campus: (date TBC)</li> </ul>

Date of accreditation or last review	09/10/2018
Date of next review	

## 9.2 Collaborative Provision

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

1. Collaborative provision	Franchise programme
Name of body (/bodies):	Perdana University - RCSI School of Medicine (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelors Degrees in Medicine, Surgery & Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO]
Date of last review	18/10/2015
Date of next review	

2. Collaborative provision	Collaborative programme
Name of body (/bodies):	RCSI-UCD Malaysia Campus (Penang, Malaysia)
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelors Degrees in Medicine, Surgery & Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO] Date of next review 2022
Date of last review	01/05/2014
Date of next review	

3. Collaborative provision	Collaborative programme
Name of body (/bodies):	Munster Technological University (formerly Institute of Technology Tralee)
Programme titles and links to publications	NUI Certificate in Biomedical Sciences
Date of last review	31/03/2012

Date of next review	
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<b>4. Collaborative provision</b>	<b>Joint/double/multiple award</b>
Name of body (/bodies):	Soochow University (China)
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelors Degree in Clinical Pharmacy (International) - RCSI/NUI; Bachelors degree in Pharmacy - Soochow University [Dual Degree programme]
Date of last review	28/08/2018
Date of next review	

### 9.3 Articulation Agreements

<b>Articulation agreements - Total number</b>	<b>1</b>
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<b>1. Articulation agreement</b>	<b>Articulation agreement</b>
Name of body (/bodies):	Soochow University (Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, China)
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelors Degree in Clinical Pharmacy (International) - RCSI/NUI; Bachelors degree in Pharmacy - Soochow University [Dual Degree programme]
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	28/08/2018
Date of next review	
Detail of the agreement	The Transnational Collaboration Agreement between the partner universities was signed on 29 August 2018. The articulation agreement provides for students entering the Soochow University (SU) Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy degree programme and, having met the stated requirements by the end of the second year of the programme, transferring to RCSI where they will complete Years 3 & 4 of the Integrated Masters Degree in Pharmacy (M. Pharm.). Students successfully completing the four years of study will graduate with the SU BSc in Pharmacy and the RCSI/NUI BSc in Clinical Pharmacy (International). In order to prepare

	potential students for the transition from SU to RCSI, the curriculum incorporates modules in Years 1 & 2 of the SU programme delivered in Soochow by visiting RCSI staff.
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[Higher Education Institution]  
2022

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**Annual Quality Report (Institution)**  
**PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE**  
**ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT**  
**Reporting Period 2020-2021**

## PART B: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

### Guidelines on Completing Part B

As outlined in the general guidelines for this template (p.5), **Part B** of the AQR documents and captures QA activities, developments and enhancements undertaken by institutions **during the reporting period** and their **impact**.

Insofar as is possible, institutions should demonstrate in Part B how plans set out in the previous AQR submission were progressed during the reporting period - these may be plans linked to strategic objectives, to reengagement advices, or to institutional review recommendations.

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

Part B provides evidence of quality improvement and enhancement and impact<sup>2</sup> of QA activities within the totality of an institution's QA system.

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

**Section 2** deals with institutional analysis of IQA enhancements and impacts including activities undertaken in respect of academic integrity, and the enhancements and impacts resulting from same.

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

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

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

#### Case Studies

QQI recommends that written case studies should:

- Be between half a page and two pages in length;
- Relate to a specific time- and subject-bound issue;
- Include an introduction that sets out a brief overview of contextual matters;
- Include any relevant supporting data and data analysis;

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

- Include links to any sources cited;
- Include a clear concluding paragraph with overview of key outcomes/learning.

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

## 1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments

### 1.1 Strategic QA Updates

#### Strategic Updates

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

To support RCSI to realise its goals relating to teaching and learning, delivering evidence-based curricula and, ultimately, to be an international leader in the field of health education the Health Professions Education Centre (HPEC) developed a five-year strategy in 2021. This year also saw the publication of a new International Engagement Strategy and the establishment of a Research Strategy Committee.

During this reporting period, RCSI successfully applied for full membership of the European University Association (EUA). EUA "members benefit from a unique support network and access to a wealth of knowledge that contributes to universities' development."<sup>3</sup>

#### Quality Enhancement Office Updates

The Quality Enhancement Office (QEO) supports quality assurance and enhancement throughout RCSI. Its activity, throughout the reporting period, was directed by the Annual Work Plan. A new Work Plan was approved at the Quality Committee meeting in February 2021 and continues to be implemented.

The [Quality Assurance Framework](#) is updated annually and the second edition of the framework was approved by the Quality Committee in December 2020.

Following a six month pause in Internal Quality Reviews, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, a revised calendar for reviews was approved by the Quality Committee in September 2020.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://eua.eu/news/600:eua-welcomes-15-new-members.html>. Accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2021.

## 1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR

No.	Planned objectives (Previous AQR) Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	Update on Status Provide brief update on status, whether completed or in progress. If an action was planned in the previous AQR, but not completed, provide reasons/short reflections for the delay/non-completion.
1	Establishment of an Academic Integrity Working Group as a sub-committee of the RCSI Quality Committee	The Academic Integrity Working Group (AIWG) was established as a sub-committee of the Quality Committee, thus giving it reporting lines to both Medicine & Health Sciences Board (MHSB) and Surgery & Postgraduate Faculties Board (SPFB). During the reporting period, the group developed a revised Academic Integrity Policy for RCSI together with aligned amendments to the University's Examination & Assessment and Disciplinary Regulations, all of which were approved by MHSB for implementation in the 2021-2022 academic year. The AIWG also worked with stakeholders across the University to revise and expand the compulsory Academic Integrity & Plagiarism Resource module that students are required to complete, again for implementation during 2021-2022.
2	Internal Quality Assurance Review of the Quality Enhancement Office (QEO)	The QEO commenced its second Internal Quality Assurance Review during the reporting period as part of the Cycle of Reviews of Professional Services Units within RCSI. In order to ensure the probity of the process, the administration and facilitation of the review process was managed by a separate administrative function within RCSI. The QEO conducted an extensive self-evaluation in preparation for the review and submitted its Self-Assessment Report (SAR) in August 2021. The Peer Review Group (PRG) site-visit will take place virtually in September 2021.
3	Development of a web portal to communicate to students and staff how RCSI 'closes the feedback loop' in response to student feedback	The RCSI Quality Enhancement Office (QEO) launched the RCSI Student Pulse Poll, a new mechanism for gathering feedback on students' learning experience, in October 2020. Given that closing the feedback loop is one of the priority areas under the current RCSI Student Engagement & Partnership (StEP) Agreement, the QEO initiated a StEP project entitled 'You Said, We Listened' to create a new Moodle page to communicate information about the Pulse Poll, to publish current Poll results and to communicate the University's response to student feedback. The Moodle page 'went live' in April 2021 and has been well received by the student body.
4	Planning and preparation for the CINNTE Institutional Review of RCSI (2022-2023)	The QEO continued its internal planning towards the CINNTE Institutional Review in 2022-2023. Due to the added workload imposed on staff across the University by the response to the Covid-19 pandemic, it did not prove possible to reconvene the Institutional Review Working Group; this will be done during the coming reporting period.

## 1.3 Governance and Management

### 1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Body	Meeting dates
Quality Committee	30 Sept. 2020; 02 Dec. 2020; 03 Feb. 2021; 28 Apr. 2021 (n = 4 meetings)
Awards & Qualifications Committee	28 Sept. 2020; 11 Jan. 2021; 15 Feb. 2021; 22 Mar. 2021; 19 Apr. 2021; 17 May 2021 (n = 6 meetings)
Academic Council	09 Sept. 2020; 15 Oct. 2020; 04 Nov. 2020; 10 Dec. 2020; 23 Jan. 2021; 11 Feb. 2021; 10 Mar. 2021; 22 Apr. 2021; 12 May 2021 (n = 9 meetings)
Medicine & Health Sciences Board	17 Sept. 2020; 19 Nov. 2020; 28 Jan. 2021; 25 Mar. 2021; 27 May 2021 (n = 5 meetings)
Surgery & Postgraduate Faculties Board	29 Oct. 2020; 25 Feb. 2021; 06 May 2021; 24 Jun. 2021 (n = 4 meetings)

### 1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

A number of key senior appointments were made during the reporting period:

Prof Kathleen Bennett, was appointed as Head of the Data Science Centre - Division of Population Health. Prof Bennett holds a BSc in Mathematics and Statistics and a PhD in Statistics from the University of Southampton. In 2015 she was awarded a Health Research Board Research Leader Award, with RCSI as the partner organization, which involved undertaking a programme of research on medication safety and adherence. She contributed to the development of an independent programme of research and supported a number of Postdoctoral researchers and PhD students – creating further capacity building and collaboration in the area. Twenty-one PhD students have successfully completed their PhDs under her supervision or co-supervision.

Prof Walter Eppich, was appointed as Professor and Inaugural Chair of RCSI SIM Centre for Simulation Education and Research. He was Professor of Paediatrics and Medical Education at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago/USA before moving to RCSI. With a background in paediatric emergency medicine, Prof Eppich earned a PhD in Medical Education from Maastricht University and uses qualitative methodologies to study interprofessional collaborative practice, team reflection, healthcare debriefing, and team adaptation. He collaborates with team and organizational psychologists to study team processes both in and outside of healthcare. He brings deep international collaborations and teaching experience, including with the Harvard Center for Medical Simulation, as a member of Society for Simulation in Healthcare Board of Directors, and the Association of Medical Educators in Europe Simulation Committee. He was named an Inaugural International Fellow, KIPRIME Programme, Karolinska Institutet, Sweden (2019).

Prof Fidelma Fitzpatrick was appointed Professor and Chair of the Department of Clinical Microbiology and commenced in September 2021. She is also a consultant microbiologist in Beaumont Hospital since 2007. Prof Fitzpatrick graduated from Trinity College with a MB BAO BCh, in 1993, having achieved a BA (Mod) Hons II.I in Microbiology in 1991 on foot of a Foundation Scholarship. She has been awarded an MD (UCD/RCSI by research), Higher Diploma in Medical Education, Diploma in Medicine for the Elderly (RCPI), Scottish Patient Safety Fellowship and is a FRCPath, and MRCP. She has authored over 100 peer-reviewed publications. Prof Fitzpatrick is currently Chair of the European C. difficile study group and the National Sepsis Committee. She was the first national Royal College of Physicians of Ireland / Health Services Executive appointed Clinical Lead for Healthcare-associated Infection and Antimicrobial Resistance Prevention.

Prof Siobhan Glavey, was appointed as Professor and Chair of the Department of Pathology in December 2020. She is also a Consultant Haematologist in Beaumont Hospital, Dublin. She received her medical degree from NUI Galway and completed her PhD in Medicine at NUI Galway and the Dana Farber Cancer Institute, Harvard Medical School, USA in 2017. She obtained her CSCST in clinical and laboratory Haematology from the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland and her Fellowship of the Royal College of Pathologists, UK in 2018. She also holds a bachelor's degree in Pharmacology from NUI Galway. She has authored several high impact publications and book chapters. Her awards include the RCSI SEED Funding and Industry Innovation Award, CEO Research Innovation Award RCSI, Greene Medal, Faculty of Pathology, Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, American Society of Haematology Abstract Achievement Award, and a National Specialist Academic Fellowship in Haematology.

Professor Jan Illing was appointed as Professor of Health Professions Education and Director of HPEC in November 2020. Prof Illing was awarded a Degree in Psychology in 1982, graduated with an M.Phil. in Social Work in 1987 and achieved her PhD in 1996. She was previously Professor of Medical Education Research at Newcastle University. From 2010-2015 she was Professor of Medical Education at Durham University. She is a member of the International Editorial Board for Medical Education and has served as advisor to numerous organisations in the field of medical education. Prof Illing has lead a research team for over 15 years, and many of her research outputs have changed policy and practice in health professions education.

Prof Rebecca Jester was appointed as the Head of School of Nursing & Midwifery at RCSI Bahrain. Prof Jester qualified as a nurse in 1985. She was awarded a Diploma in Professional Studies in Nursing in 1993, a BSc (Hons) Education Studies in Nursing in 1995 and a PhD in Health Sciences in 2001. Prof Jester has held several senior academic positions including: Head of School of Nursing & Midwifery, Keele University, Head of the Nursing School Abu Dhabi for Griffith University, Head of Department of Adult Nursing and Midwifery, London South Bank University and Professor of Nursing, University of Wolverhampton. She was awarded a personal chair (Professorship) in Orthopaedic Nursing in 2008 by Keele University. She has authored a number of leading text books and has over 40 publications in academic and professional journals.

Prof Robert McMurray was appointed Academic Director of the RCSI Graduate School of Healthcare Management (formerly the Institute of Leadership). Prof McMurray holds a BA in Social Policy from Teesside University and an MSc in European Social Policy Analysis from the University of Bath. His doctoral thesis examined inter-organizational working between health and social service organisations. Prof Murray's work is published in a range of leading management journals including Human Relations, Work

Employment & Society, Public Administration, Organization and Social Science & Medicine. He co-edits the Routledge Series on Women Writers in Organisation & Management, and co-wrote the book *Darkside of Emotional Labour*. Previous posts included Deputy Dean at the University of York Management School, and Director of the Executive MBA at Durham University.

Prof Darran O'Connor was appointed as Head of the School of Postgraduate Studies. Prof O'Connor obtained his PhD from RCSI/Trinity College Dublin in 2000. Subsequently, he conducted his postdoctoral training at Columbia University, New York and the University of Glasgow. He established the Molecular Oncology Research Group at RCSI in 2015. In 2019, he joined the School of Postgraduate Studies as Deputy Head, with responsibility for direction and development of the School's PhD programmes. Prof O'Connor has won multiple awards for his research and has published the work from his group in high impact journals such as *Nature Reviews Cancer*, *Nature Cell Biology*, *Nature Communications*, *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, *Clinical Cancer Research* and *Cancer Research* among 68 publications to date.

Mr. Sean Robinson was appointed as Director of Education in the department of Physician Associate Studies. Mr. Robinson graduated with a Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies in 2003 and completed his Doctorate in Health Sciences (DHSc) in 2014. He has worked clinically in interventional cardiology, general cardiology and urgent care. In 2009 he started his educational career as an Assistant Professor at the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences in the Department of PA Studies in Boston. In 2013 he moved to Washington DC where he worked as the Director of Didactic Education for the PA Program at the George Washington University. He served as the President of the Massachusetts Association of PAs and as Director at Large for the Virginia Academy of PAs.

## 1.4 Internal Monitoring and Review

### 1.4.1 Overview of Periodic Reviews

Unit of review for which report has been published during reporting period	Date of completion/reason for conducting review (if not planned) or non-completion (if planned but not conducted)	Links to relevant publications
School of Physiotherapy	April 2021 Rolling internal quality assurance review	<a href="https://www.rcsi.com/quality-enhancement-office/internal-quality-reviews">https://www.rcsi.com/quality-enhancement-office/internal-quality-reviews</a>
Human Resources Department	June2021 Rolling internal quality assurance review	<a href="https://www.rcsi.com/quality-enhancement-office/internal-quality-reviews">https://www.rcsi.com/quality-enhancement-office/internal-quality-reviews</a>

## 1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels<sup>4</sup> involved in IQA

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

	Total	Academic Schools/ Department	Professional Services/Support Unit	Approval/Review of Linked Provider	Programme Approval	Programme Review	Other**
Number of review/ evaluation processes	12	1	1	N/A	3	0	7
<i>of those:</i>							
On-site processes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Desk reviews	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Virtual processes	12	1	1	N/A	3	-	7
Average panel size for each process type*		5	5	N/A	3	3	2

\* excluding secretary if not a full panel member

\*\*Approvals - Existing Programmes (Major Changes)

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<sup>4</sup> QQI acknowledges that the terminology used to describe the groups of individuals that conduct peer review/evaluation varies from institution to institution.

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

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

Type of Expert/ Role on Panel	Total	Gender			Internal	National	International			Institution Type	
		Male	Female	or specified			UK, incl. NI	Other European	Outside of Europe	Similar	Different
Chair	2 ‡		2			2				2	
Secretary	2	2				2					2
Academic/Discipline Specific	19	11	8		9	2	8			18	1
Student Representative	2	1	1			2				2	
QA	(2) ‡										
Teaching & Learning	1	1			1					1	
External Industry /Third Mission	4		4		4					4	

## 2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

### Governance & Management of Quality

The Quality Committee Terms of Reference were updated this year to include the newly established Academic Integrity Working Group (AIWG). Terms of Reference for the AIWG were also developed and approved by the Quality Committee. These measures supported the establishment of the AIWG.

A review of sectoral practice was undertaken prior to the development of “*Preliminary Best Practice Guidance for ‘Virtual’ Peer Review Group Site-Visits*”. This guidance was created to support the pivot to an online peer review group site-visit process which was implemented from September 2020. Feedback from participants indicates that these online site-visits work very well.

RCSI, through the RCSI Quality Committee and Quality Enhancement Office, is committed to ensuring that learner feedback is regularly sought and considered. In October 2020 a new Student Pulse poll was launched to complement existing student feedback mechanisms. As a further enhancement, a Student Engagement and Partnership Project (StEP), “*You said we listened*”, developed a Moodle page outlining the results of the survey and the changes implemented as a result. A Case Study in section 4.2 provides further information on these initiatives.

### Programmes of Education & Training

#### Approved Programmes

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

- MSc Advanced Clinical Practice (NFQ Level 9; Major Award; 90 ECTS)
- MSc in Technologies and Analytics in Precision Medicine Programme (NFQ Level 9; Major Award; 90 ECTS)
- Postgraduate Diploma in Technologies and Analytics in Precision Medicine Programme (NFQ Level 9; Major Award; 60 ECTS)
- Postgraduate Certificate in Technologies and Analytics in Precision Medicine Programme (NFQ Level 9; Minor Award; 30 ECTS)
- Professional Diploma in Digital Health Transformation (NFQ Level 9; Special Purpose Award; 30 ECTS)
- PhD by Prior Publication (NFQ Level 10; Major Award)
- MD by Publication (NFQ Level 10; Major Award)
- MD by Prior Publication (NFQ Level 10; Major Award)

#### New Programmes at the School of Pharmacy & Biomolecular Sciences

The School of Pharmacy & Biomolecular Sciences received a Higher Education Authority (HEA) award of €7.8 million under the Human Capital Initiative Pillar 3, “*Innovation and Agility*”, to expand the School’s focus on emerging and future pharma technologies. The project, entitled “*Enabling Future Pharma – Beyond the Pill*”, will establish a suite of programmes across undergraduate, postgraduate and life-long learning, with multiple exit points and short course options. Programmes will be delivered in conjunction with key enterprise partners and will include:

- BSc in Advanced Therapeutic Technologies – commencing September 2022.
- Micro-credential modules, to support lifelong learning, which can build to an MSc in Technologies and Analytics in Precision Medicine; this MSc programme commenced in September 2021.

#### Curricular Transformation at the School of Medicine

Significant work was completed on the international benchmarking and design phases of the Transforming Healthcare Education Project (THEP 2). In planning for its implementation, the School of Medicine developed six work streams: teaching, assessment, clinical placements, student choice, learning communities and coaching. Each is led by a programme manager working with representation from senior management. The School expects to commence the implementation phase of the new curriculum in September 2022.

### Excellence in Simulation at the School of Physiotherapy

The School of Physiotherapy is committed to becoming a centre of excellence for the use of simulation training for physiotherapy education in Ireland. During the reporting period it continued to embed simulation within the curriculum, supported by RCSI SIM Centre for Simulation Education and Research. This included the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Curtin University, completion of an Irish Research Council funded project to develop a framework for simulation as a replacement for traditional hospital placement in Ireland, conduction and evaluation of the first-ever simulated clinical placement in Ireland and a student engagement project to explore the attitudes of physiotherapy students in Ireland towards simulation-based learning.

### **Staff Recruitment, Management & Development**

#### Health Professions Education Centre

The Health Professions Education Centre (HPEC) developed a five-year strategy to support RCSI to develop its goals with regards to teaching and learning, delivering evidence-based curricula and, ultimately, to be an international leader in this field. The strategy sets out a vision of a culture where educational expertise is woven into the organisation and where RCSI is recognised as a centre of excellence in this field.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Postgraduate Diploma in Health Professions Education successfully moved online and by August 2021, over 270 RCSI faculty had graduated from the programme. HPEC collaborated closely with colleagues in IT, the Library, Media Services and RCSI SIM to offer support for online delivery of teaching as part of the digitally-engaged learning (DEL) project to develop the technical and teaching skills of faculty. A total of 64 synchronous online workshops were attended by 379 faculty members. These were supported by asynchronous engagement in VLE activities, hands-on practice sessions and one-on-one drop-in clinics.

#### Age-Friendly University Network

RCSI held a week of online activities to celebrate Positive Ageing Week. This week was organised by The Age Friendly Staff Network in collaboration with Age Action. The Network also launched a Positive Ageing Booklet which was shared with all staff.

#### RCSI INSPIRE

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

### **Teaching, Learning & Assessment**

#### Covid-19 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

A comprehensive programme to assure and enhance the quality of teaching, learning and assessment during the Covid-19 pandemic was further developed and implemented during the reporting period. Section 4.1 includes a Case Study which provides an overview of the quality assurance and quality enhancement of the digital, campus and clinical environments in the ongoing pandemic.

#### RCSI SIM Centre for Simulation Education and Research

Following the appointment of the Chair of the RCSI SIM Centre for Simulation Education and Research, RCSI SIM was formally established. With an emphasis on collaboration, learner-centeredness and patient focus, the team supported over 400 teaching sessions and courses, enhancing teaching, learning and assessment through the use of simulation. The development of the broader research focus in simulation, and appointment of the Chair is supported by a HEA educational innovation award of €1.2 million.

### Teaching Hero Awards

Forty RCSI staff were recognised at the 2020/21 Teaching Hero Awards which are coordinated by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in association with the Union of Students in Ireland. These Awards celebrate outstanding teaching and it is a testimony to the commitment of RCSI staff that so many were recognised by their students as an innovative or inspiring teacher.

### **Information & Data Management**

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

The collection, analysis and dissemination of student feedback in RCSI are managed by the QEO. The QEO ran and processed over 302 surveys during the reporting period, with response rates of 43% to end-of-semester student feedback surveys and various response rates depending on the nature and audience of the project. 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 anonymous and confidential feedback each semester. In response to rapid changes in the provision of teaching and learning triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic, two new feedback mechanisms were implemented during the reporting period: a once-off mid-term survey for all new students (Foundation Year and Year 1) and a monthly Student Pulse Poll.

The regular end of Semester 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. A new section 'Online Learning', added in Semester 2 of 2019-20, was updated in 2020-21 to track students' experience with online learning. The end of Semester 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.

Feedback on student engagement is collected independently from first and final year undergraduate students and from postgraduate research students via [StudentSurvey.ie](https://www.studentsurvey.ie) and benefited from a national social media promotional campaign managed centrally by StudentSurvey.ie in addition to the local campaign managed by the RCSI Students' Union. The raw institutional survey data returned to RCSI from this national survey is used by the QEO to produce an internal benchmarking report which places RCSI within the context of comparator institutions and programme types, and which identifies common themes emerging from the national survey and from RCSI internal student 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.

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

## **Supports & Resources for Learners**

RCSI continued to support students through its team of committed education, career and welfare professionals. Enhancements provided in the reporting period include those outlined below.

### Welfare

Student Welfare supports were delivered to students self-isolating due to Covid-19, as well as to those in mandatory hotel quarantine. Welfare events, including Mental Health Month, and Health and Wellbeing Week, were delivered in partnership with Student Union Welfare. Video resources for students were provided through a partnership between Student Welfare and the Centre for Positive Psychology. Training on 'Responding to Students in Distress' and 'Staff Buddy' was delivered.

The undergraduate Student Union Mental Health Awareness Subcommittee was formed to help provide information, guidance and tips on the psychological well-being of students. The subcommittee normalised conversations about mental health, empowering students to speak out and ask questions over weekly virtual catch-up cuppas, broadened their reach on social media platforms and offered training to staff and students on suicide awareness and prevention.

### Learning support

Additional part-time learning support tutors were provided for students registered with the Learning Access and Facilitation service. In collaboration with the library team, an online booking system was introduced for study spaces and library access for students with access and disability needs.

### Career support

A model of Career Partnering was developed for each school which will be piloted for the next academic year. An ePortfolio initiative was developed using the Careerhub platform to include registration questions in line with career framework for all students. A Professional Identity Series of six webinars, with nine international speakers, was facilitated in collaboration with the Students Union and student societies. This series was attended by over 300 students. A community of practice with career advisers in other third level universities was developed during the reporting period.

### Extracurricular

RCSI was awarded three National Board of Irish College Societies (BICS) Awards in recognition of the outstanding contribution of the University's student societies to student life. The Student Services Office launched the Student Life HQ, a one-stop digital shop for all clubs, societies and student events. This innovation features a real-time calendar with direct access to virtual events and activities. For newly arriving students it served as a centralised hub to learn about the 87 active clubs and societies in addition to facilitating new member signups.

Due to the health and safety risks of overseas travel and the possible impact to students' academic progression, RCSI advised international students against travelling to their home countries for the winter holiday break at the end of Semester 1 in 2020. With so many students making this tough choice, working in partnership with student unions, staff from across the University devised a creative programme of support and events within the restrictions of Covid-19 for students to look forward to during their two-week break. The result was a winter holiday programme that included Christmas catering, an outdoor events programme, student volunteering and on-line clubs and societies events.

### Student Leadership Development Programme

The pilot of the Student Leadership Development Programme took place during February and March of 2021. 63 student leaders successfully completed the four-week programme which was aligned with the NHS Clinical Leadership Competency Framework. The programme was part of a student staff partnership which was developed under the Student Engagement and Partnership (StEP) initiative.

## **Other Parties Involved in Education & Training**

### RCSI Hospitals Group

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

### Dublin City Council & Dublin Fire Brigade

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

### Irish Hospice Foundation

RCSI has provided postgraduate education programmes in Bereavement and Loss in partnership with the Irish Hospice Foundation since 2004. The Irish Hospice Foundation (IHF) is a national charity that addresses dying, death and bereavement in Ireland. Its vision is an Ireland where people facing end of life or bereavement, and those who care for them, are provided with the care and support that they need. In its early years, IHF was instrumental in raising funds for Our Lady's Hospice Dublin and in fundraising for the establishment of a second Dublin Hospice, which became St Francis Hospice in Raheny. Since then, IHF has grown to develop programmes in education, research and bereavement services. IHF works to bring hospice principles into acute hospitals and residential care settings, and to extend palliative care to non-malignant conditions. RCSI offers three programmes in collaboration with IHF, one Professional Certificate and two Masters degree programmes. These are governed through a Programme Board including RCSI and IHF stakeholders. The Professional Certificate in Children & Loss (NFQ Level 9 Special Purpose Award) aims to equip professionals who work with children and adolescents with the skills necessary to understand and support them when grieving. The original MSc in Bereavement Studies programme was revised and revalidated in 2016-2017 to offer two parallel streams: the MSc in Loss & Bereavement and the MSc in Loss & Bereavement (Counselling). These programmes aim to impact on health, social and community systems and ultimately to enhance quality of life.

### National College of Art & Design

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

### RCSI-Sorbonne Partnership

During the reporting period, a partnership agreement was signed between RCSI and the Sorbonne University which will support the exchange of students and staff, initially involving two students from the Sorbonne spending one academic year at RCSI and five RCSI students undertaking a 2-month clinical elective in one of the Sorbonne's affiliated hospitals. The agreement also supports staff mobility for four members of staff each, from RCSI and the Sorbonne University, in the areas of education and training. There is further scope to increase these numbers in the future.

### **Research Activities Enhancements**

A number of research activity enhancements were implemented during the reporting period. Researchers at RCSI published a total of 1,435 PubMed indexed articles in 2020 (up 40% on 2019). The total external funding awarded to RCSI for the calendar year 2020 was €31.5 million (up from €20.9 million in 2019).

### Research Networks

RCSI Council established the all-Ireland Irish Forum of Surgical Research with the remit of establishing a surgical research network open to all interested in surgical research collaboration. Concurrently, surgical trainees set up a collaborative network which offers the potential for Irish surgical units to involve patients in research projects. Both initiatives will help to promote and support research projects with a coordinated approach.

### New Research Committees

A Research Strategy Committee was established to identify strategic opportunities to grow RCSI research and innovation activities and improve the University's research performance and impact. A Biobanking Committee was established and RCSI invested in developing institutional biobanking resources. The University also joined the HRB-funded PPI (Public and Patient Involvement) Ignite Network deepening RCSI's commitment to PPI in research.

### Research Focused Staff Consultation

To progress RCSI's engagement with Patient and Public Involvement in Research (PPI) a staff survey was conducted. This survey set out to explore the current involvement of RCSI researchers in PPI and its challenges and opportunities, with a goal of developing further supports and driving awareness of PPI. Another survey targeted to the research audience explored staff involvement in consultancy services; this survey endeavoured to determine how these activities might be supported by the University to further grow industry collaborations.

## **Third Mission Activities, Societal and Community Engagement**

### RCSI Engage

RCSI continued to implement 'RCSI Engage, a Strategy to Support Health and Education in our Local and National Communities, 2019-2023' during the reporting period. The vision of RCSI Engage is to enhance human health and education by building reciprocal partnerships between RCSI staff and students and our local and national communities. RCSI Engage builds upon existing initiatives including REACH RCSI, RCSI MyHealth and the RCSI Transition Year Mini-Medical School (MiniMed) programme. The strategy aims to inspire and support learners at local and national level, and to support and promote improved lifelong health and wellbeing.

Several RCSI community engagement initiatives were modified in line with public health guidance such as the Christmas in the Community 2020 programme, which saw teams of volunteer students and staff mobilised to deliver festive gifts to people in their own homes. The MiniMed programme was held online for the first time which allowed 4,000 students to participate. The RCSI MyHealth lecture series transitioned from live, in-person events to pre-recorded, virtual events. Almost 8,000 people registered for the 2020/21 series; the 12 events have been viewed over 57,000 times on YouTube and over 197,000 times on Facebook.

Additional local initiatives included a Junior Researcher Programme, a remote Wellness Workshop for local secondary school students and a student partnership project to promote physical health among primary school

children. Collaborative initiatives included a Creative Arts Spring School, Creative Arts Summer School and the Dublin Learning City Festival.

#### Support of Pandemic Response

Initiatives during the reporting period had a particular focus on contributing to the national pandemic response. Many students volunteered at the Helix Vaccination Centre, in Irish hospitals, and as contact tracers. Pharmacy students remained on frontline clinical placements throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. RCSI made its educational expertise available to the Irish government to train contact tracers, and its simulation facilities available to help upskill hospital staff working in challenging Covid-19 environments.

With colleagues in RCSI Library, the Department of Surgical Affairs created a Covid-19 hub to collate information and published articles to support surgeons in practice during the pandemic. With UK colleagues, and linking in with national clinical programmes in surgery, orthopaedics and emergency medicine, a project to support prioritisation of patients was undertaken. This proved to be a helpful resource for surgeons in practice as elective lists were cancelled with hospital beds occupied by Covid-19 patients. It supported them to assess hospital resources and prioritise the sickest patients.

#### Positive Psychology

In October 2020, RCSI launched the world's first academic centre for positive psychology and lifestyle medicine. The Centre's free online course, "*The Science of Health and Happiness*", has now seen almost 30,000 enrolments and received overwhelmingly positive feedback.

#### Institute of Global Surgery

RCSI launched its Institute of Global Surgery in March 2021. This institute is a manifestation of RCSI's commitment to informing and improving global healthcare delivery through research and education and will advance RCSI's work to bring surgery to those who cannot yet get it. The IGS will lead global efforts to ensure equity for patients in need of surgical care and build on RCSI's extensive experience in surgical training, education, and research partnerships in Africa.

#### HEA PATH Network

In December 2020, RCSI joined the HEA PATH Network. The University is now part of a consortium with University College Dublin, Institute of Art and Design, Marino Institute of Education, National College of Art and Design and Trinity College Dublin to promote and advance equality of access to higher education for underrepresented groups.

#### **Integration of UN Sustainable Development Goals**

RCSI has a singular focus on the improvement of human health worldwide, through undergraduate and postgraduate training, medical research, industry partnerships and community outreach. As a result, the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) resonate with the University's mission and vision.

[RCSI continues to make progress towards realising the UNSDGs.](#) During the reporting period, the publication of the Times Higher Education University Impact Rankings 2020 placed RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences joint second in the world for 'Good Health and Well-Being' (UNSDG #3) from a total of 871 institutions.

## 2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity

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

As an indication of the importance of Academic Integrity to the University, an Academic Integrity Working Group was established in this reporting period. The inaugural meeting took place in January 2021. The AIWG is a formal structure to assist RCSI to monitor and respond to initiatives launched by National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) and by QQI in area of academic integrity.

Membership of the AIWG is broad based and representative of units across the University. The group agreed an initial priority of developing a new Academic Integrity Policy. A sub-group led development of the policy which, together with aligned amendments to the University's Examination & Assessment and Disciplinary Regulations, was approved by Academic Council in May 2021. Students registering on undergraduate and postgraduate programmes are required to sign the University's Student Agreement, indicating their agreement to adhere to all relevant policies and regulations; this includes the new Academic Integrity Policy.

An interactive course resource, on the Moodle Virtual Learning Environment, provides essential information to students on how to act with honesty and responsibility in preparing and submitting coursework. In particular it provides an understanding of plagiarism and of how to avoid it and a comprehensive introduction to Turnitin, the similarity detection software used by RCSI to screen all coursework submitted by students. An interim review and update of this resource was undertaken to reflect the newly introduced Academic Integrity policy, prior to the start of the academic year 2021/22. Links to QQI NAIN resources were added to the course and the quiz was updated to include current issues such as contract cheating. It is envisaged that a full review and update of the resource will be overseen by the AIWG during the next academic year.

In relation to the maintenance of the highest standards of professionalism in research and associated postgraduate degree programmes, RCSI research governance principles align with the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity. Postgraduate research students must sign and agree the Postgraduate Code of Conduct each year as they renew their registration and must acknowledge the RCSI Statement on Research Integrity. All research students must complete a Research Ethics and Integrity module in their first year to ensure that they have a basic grounding in the concepts of research integrity.

RCSI is a member of QQI's National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN). The Head of Registry Services and Director of the Quality Enhancement Office represented RCSI in the Network during the reporting period.

### 3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period

#### 3.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives

No.	<b>Relevant objectives</b> Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	<b>Planned actions and indicators</b>  <i>Note: Include details of unit responsible, and how planned action will address the relevant strategic priority and/or reengagement advice/CINNTE recommendation.</i>  <i>If the institution is preparing for cyclical review, include how the planned actions will address the relevant review objective(s).</i>
1	Development of a new Academic Integrity Resource	A newly updated Academic Integrity online resource will be developed by the Academic Integrity Working Group (AIWG) to reflect the changing landscape of Academic Integrity and in response to recent National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) publications and initiatives. A subgroup of cross-university colleagues from the AIWG will oversee this resource development and plan for its implementation.
2	Internal Quality Assurance Review of the Quality Enhancement Office (QEO) – Phases II & III	During the last reporting period, phase I (self-assessment) of the QEO’s Internal Quality Assurance Review, was completed. Phases II and III will therefore be implemented during the upcoming reporting period. Phase II will comprise of external validation by a Peer Review Group carrying out a site visit, which will result in the issuing of a report detailing their findings, commendations and recommendations. Phase III will see the QEO developing a Quality Improvement Plan which will be presented to the Medicine and Health Sciences Board for approval.
3	Undertake project to investigate ways to reduce the impact of data-gathering activities on the learner population.	The aim of this project will be to identify and consult a wide range of stakeholders (including the student body) in an effort to design a framework and associated processes to coordinate, promote and support better quality educational research (particularly research that focusses on students). The primary output of the project will be a summary of the status quo and the description how things might be improved in the form of a potential framework and associated processes to develop, coordinate and support educational and institutional research. A framework that can support educational researchers (incl. students as researchers) to an end-point that maximises the benefit and minimises the impacts to themselves, RCSI and the wider education and research community.
4	Planning and preparation for the CINNTE Institutional Review of RCSI (2023)	RCSI will continue to plan & prepare for the CINNTE Institutional Review in 2023. During the renewal period, this will involve finalising the time-line for self-evaluation, reconvening the Institutional Review Working Group (also a sub-committee of the Quality Committee) to manage the process and launching the internal communications strategy to promote awareness of and participation in the review process to all staff and students.

## 3.2 Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods

### 3.2.1 Reviews planned for Next Reporting Period

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
Quality Enhancement Office	Sept. 2021	2015
Office of Research and Innovation	Nov. 2021	2015
Irish Institute of Pharmacy	Jan. 2022	N/A
School of Pharmacy and Biomolecular Sciences	Mar. 2022	2014
Graduate School of Healthcare Management (formerly the Institute of Leadership)	June 2022	2012

### 3.2.2 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
<b>2022-2023 Reporting Period</b>		
RCSI-UCD Malaysia Campus	Sept. 2022	2014
Student Services	Nov. 2022	2012
Admissions Department	Mar. 2023	2016
Estates Department	May 2023	2016
<b>2023-2024 Reporting Period</b>		
Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery	Sept. 2023	N/A
Finance Department	Nov. 2023	N/A
School of Medicine	Feb. 2024	2016
School of Postgraduate Studies	April 2024	2018

## 4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies

### 4.1 Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement of the Digital, Campus and Clinical Environments in the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic.

#### [i] Introduction

RCSI continued to develop, innovate, evaluate and implement a comprehensive programme of measures to assure, and where possible enhance, the quality of provision during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Planning for mitigation measures for the 2020-2021 period commenced in the previous academic year and were considered at both Academic Council and the Medicine & Health Sciences Board meetings. In most schools a blended approach was adopted for the year, prioritising the teaching of clinical skills in the campus environment.

Student feedback on handling of Covid-19 by RCSI was positive, 78% of students who completed a survey in Semester 2 2021 were satisfied with RCSI's response to the pandemic. RCSI put a lot of effort in creating a safe learning environment on campus, the vast majority of students (86%) declared feeling 'adequately protected' from COVID-19 when attending classes on campus and a similar proportion (87%) were satisfied with the testing and screening system developed by the University. Communication around the changes and adjustments to the Programmes was seen as clear by 76% of students.

#### (ii) The Digital Environment

In addition to the prevailing public health circumstances, RCSI's ambition to deliver a transformative education and learning experience for students, were the drivers of the development of innovative digital solutions across the University. During the reporting period, new students experienced a transformed digital welcome with remote access to RCSI IT services, instructions and video guides, and a dedicated onboarding support service. Combined with delivery of student laptops during lockdown, this meant that new students were digitally prepared to commence their courses. Other innovations and supports included:

- Ongoing provision of enhanced IT support services to ensure that students and staff across campuses and off-site could engage with and benefit from RCSI digital solutions. This included the provision of continuing digital upskilling of academic and professional staff.
- The Health Professions Education Centre continued to play a vital role in disseminating best practice guidance and resources provided by national and international bodies and to provide staff training sessions and webinars on teaching within the digital environment.
- Academic and pastoral support for students focused on service delivery in the online environment. These supports were provided at institutional, school and tutor level.

#### RealWear

An exciting example of digital innovation was the introduction of RealWear glasses by the Department of Surgery. Realwear glasses are a hands-free device worn on the head which have a camera, a microphone, and a small display visible to the person wearing the device. This device can remotely connect to a Microsoft Teams meeting and thus the person wearing it may communicate with other people from afar.

This was used to replace bedside teaching at the height of COVID incidence (Jan-Feb 2021) when acute hospital wards were closed to students in order to avoid extra health risks both for patients and for students. The consultant or clinical tutor would wear the device on the ward and would take a history from a patient (after obtaining the patient's consent), while the students would watch it live in allocated lecture theatre/rooms. Since both the person wearing the RealWear glasses and the students were in the same Microsoft Teams meeting, it was possible to ask questions live, to show any scars or other relevant physical exam findings.

The student and consultant/lecturer feedback on this technology was consistently positive. This teaching method enabled RCSI to teach larger student numbers in a safe way at times when the maximum student number at bedside was very limited. It was also very safe for patients as they did not have to leave their ward, nor have to come into contact with a lot of people.

### (iii) The Campus Environment

Healthcare education requires a mix of knowledge, skills and professional identity formation. Therefore, RCSI undertook to provide a safe campus environment, where appropriate, for the provision of in-person learning. This also provided students with opportunities for interpersonal engagement, fostering the development of their professional identity as future healthcare professionals. Steps taken to mitigate risks in the campus environment included:

- Redesigning the university campuses to ensure the highest levels of safety. This included campus physical adjustments, hygiene and public health measures.
- Creating a new campus, in the conference facilities at Croke Park stadium, to ensure all students had at least three days' access to campus each week.
- Student learning community and sub-group creation ensured that class sizes could be reduced. Where possible, learning communities were composed of household groups.
- Protecting the health of students, staff and their patients with an on-site testing facility and laboratory and the implementation of daily symptom checker tools. In a unique innovation, an internal Covid-19 screening programme was developed and operationalised by RCSI's research team. Testing was provided at two sites to accommodate clinical year students. The RCSI Covid Administration team, within Student, Academic and Regulatory Affairs, managed in-house Covid testing and contact-tracing for RCSI.
- Creating bookable study and gym facilities provided students with safe access to these important services.
- Altering research laboratories and the development of scheduled staggered access rotas to laboratory facilities to provide safe access to laboratory facilities.

### (iv) The Clinical Environment

The clinical and placement environments are critical to the development of the skills required of student healthcare professionals.

- The provision of alternative arrangements for experiential learning was complex. Some programmes were required to reschedule or extend placement periods to ensure that students completed their placement requirements e.g., in the School of Physiotherapy, Year 2 placements were extended to allow students to make up for time lost due to COVID, whereas for senior students a modified placement schedule was implemented following the requirement for a brief placement suspension.

- Further innovations were implemented in the use of simulation. This included the replacement of some clinical placements (e.g., first-year physiotherapy students) with simulation-based training to ensure that students acquired the skills required by their programme. In the School of Medicine, when hospital sites were closed to students, clinical teaching continued off-site for senior cycle students with simulation-based teaching using simulated patients.
- Additional measures to protect the health of students and patients in the clinical environment were also implemented e.g., students confirming by daily diary that they were symptom free and recording ward attendance to support tracing.

#### [iv] Quality Assurance of teaching & assessment in all environments

The Schools within the University of Medicine & Health Sciences are responsible for all RCSI educational programmes leading to awards aligned to the National Framework of Qualifications. The Covid-19 mitigation measures implemented by the University were in accordance with the guidance issued by Quality & Qualifications Ireland (QQI), and the relevant Professional Regulatory and Statutory Bodies (PRSBs) and cognate bodies in other jurisdictions:

- The over-arching principles guiding the development of alternative arrangements for teaching & assessment in the University are [a] the maintenance of the integrity, quality and standard of RCSI programmes, and [b] ensuring that no student or trainee is disadvantaged due to the prevailing circumstances and the University's mitigation measures (the 'no detriment' principle).
- Stakeholders consulted in the ongoing development and implementation of alternative included students, Student, Academic & Regulatory Affairs, academic & clinical staff and the relevant PRSBs.
- Marks & Standards documents continued to be reviewed as required in consultation with programme External Examiners, and were approved by Academic Council and by Medicine & Health Sciences Board.
- Assessment practices were reviewed and adapted as required e.g., all PhD & MD viva voce examinations continued to be held online, as the School of Postgraduate Studies' experience was that this format worked very well.
- The selection of teaching environment was carefully considered in the development of contingency plans at school/programme level e.g., in the School of Pharmacy & Biomolecular Sciences:
  - Years 1-3 were each divided into two Learning Communities which were then taught separately, necessitating considerable "double teaching".
  - Year 4 remained as a unitary class and spent the bulk of the year on practice placement.
  - Year 5 again remained as a unitary class with Semester 1 delivered online and Semester 2 spent on placement.
  - Didactic teaching was delivered online whereas practicals were delivered on campus.
- Programme schedules were adjusted as required throughout the period e.g. in the School of Pharmacy & Biomolecular Sciences course blocks were extended to allow additional time for programme delivery; in the School of Nursing & Midwifery all Beaumont Hospital-based programmes were paused during January & February 2021 due to the pressure of COVID infections, but this did not delay completion as programme delivery was extended where necessary to compensate; in the Graduate School of Healthcare Management submission deadlines for assignments & other coursework were extended.

There is no doubt that Covid-19 has been disruptive. However, students, academic and professional staff have all worked together to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment in an ever-evolving environment have been provided to the highest-standards of quality.

## 4.2 Additional Case Studies

### 4.2.1 The Student Pulse Survey

The RCSI [Quality Framework](#) sets out that the gathering of data to support evidence-based quality assurance and quality improvement processes is a core principle underpinning RCSI's culture of quality; particular value is placed upon the views of learners. Survey data collection in RCSI is centralised and managed by the Quality Enhancement Office (QEO) and a comprehensive programme of student satisfaction & engagement surveys is overseen by this office.

To capture feedback on a more frequent basis, in response to the rapid changes in student experience due to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020-21, RCSI introduced a new feedback mechanism, the 'Student Pulse Poll'. This short, 4-question survey was conducted monthly to track changes in student experience. Students were asked to rate their experience over the last four weeks on a 5-point scale from – 'I am happy with everything about my RCSI experience' to 'I am unhappy with everything about my RCSI experience'. This question was followed by space to make free text comments on the positive aspects of the experience and suggestions for improvement. Student profiling information (year, programme & international student status) was recorded automatically with the responses. In order to ease the burden on students and in the hope of optimising the response, the poll randomly selected one third of the student population (proportionate to the size of each school) and those who were invited in a given month were excluded from the sample frame in the following month.

Over the academic year 2020-2021, the Student Pulse Poll was conducted in 4-5 week intervals and seven waves of data were collected, to a total of 1769 ratings and 2920 comments. The response rates were strong at the beginning of the academic year (50% in October and 43% in November) but gradually decreased wave by wave to reach 20% in April. Feedback from the Student Pulse Poll was reported and presented regularly to the Senior Management Team, to Year Leads and to the Students' Union. A thematic analysis of the free text comments submitted by students in the survey was conducted for each wave, identifying the key themes in the areas of satisfaction and suggestions for improvement. Feedback from stakeholders was very positive, highlighting the speed of analysis and delivery of the results.

Closing the feedback loop is an essential component of quality enhancement and contributes to ensuring that students are confident that their opinions are responded to and valued. To that end, the QEO carried out a student partnership project entitled 'You Said, We Listened – a Moodle page for the RCSI Student Pulse Poll' during 2020-2021. The main objective of the project was, with students, to co-create a new Moodle page for the RCSI Student Pulse Poll. The purpose of this page is to communicate information about the Pulse Poll, to publish poll results, and to communicate the University's response to student feedback. The QEO also developed a process for sharing the results with different stakeholders and responding to student feedback.

The new webpage was launched in April 2021 with a focus on non-academic matters that affect the entire student population, as opposed to individual student cohorts. Furthermore, it takes into account only matters highlighted in the Student Pulse Poll. The QEO worked with RCSI departments such as SARA (Student, Academic and Regulatory Affairs), Library, CoMPPAS (Centre for Mastery: Personal, Professional & Academic Success) and IT to develop content and updates on topics such as access to study spaces, communication, student support and Covid-19 response measures. The page was promoted in student newsletters and Pulse Poll invitations.

Student sentiment remained positive throughout the year, despite the great challenges brought by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the Student Pulse Poll provided nearly real-time feedback allowing RCSI to respond quickly to the needs of students, which changed over the course of the academic year.

An example of a change arising from Student Pulse was an improvement in response time to student queries from faculty coordinators. This was achieved through implementation of an improved process to streamline queries and assign them immediately in priority/date order. SARA also worked with class representatives to raise awareness of appropriate routes to submit queries to avoid query duplication.

The Student Pulse feedback was also used to improve study space access on campus. In response to students' expressed needs, the library team arranged access for students in buildings and rooms across the campus and within the library floors. As the public health advice allowed, the library team moved away from timetabled access to facilitating broader access. Students expressed how important access to these study spaces has been in supporting their learning.

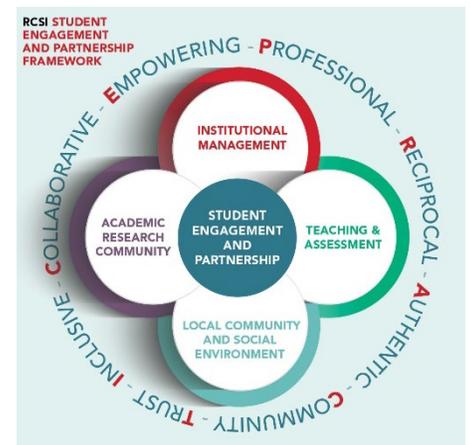
#### 4.2.2 Student Engagement and Partnership (StEP) Programme

The [RCSI Strategic Plan 2018-2022](#) places student partnership as a core strategic enabler in striving to transform healthcare education, research and service for the benefit of human health. This is being realised through the RCSI StEP Programme which was formally launched in October 2020. This formal StEP programme includes the following:

**RCSI Definition of Student Partnership:** - *'Through active student engagement, RCSI is nurturing, promoting and implementing a culture of student partnership and inclusivity, where the expertise and perspectives of students and staff are equally valued and, by working together, we are driving positive change across the RCSI community for the benefit of human health'.*

**RCSI StEP framework** – which includes guiding principles that RCSI consider to be best **PRACTICE** for student engagement and partnership – see opposite.

**Annual StEP Agreements** - these are formal agreements between RCSI and the SU and PGSU and reflects RCSI's commitment to students as co-creators of their learning experience. It is also the means by which each year, through active partnership between staff and students, RCSI can continuously improve that experience. It defines how students and staff work together by way of shared goals to shape the design and delivery of programmes of education and student support systems, ultimately enhancing the overall student experience. Three StEP agreements have been launched to date; the second of which launched during the reporting period.



**RCSI Student Partnership Champion Award** – these awards *are presented to students and staff who have made outstanding contributions to the overall student experience by working in partnership and sharing their expertise and perspectives on key RCSI projects.* 26 staff and 83 students received these awards during the reporting period.

**RCSI StEP Funding** – students and staff can apply for StEP funding to work collaboratively on key projects designed to enhance the overall student experience. There are two open calls for StEP funding annually. In 2020-2021, 12 level 1 and 5 level 2 StEP-funded projects were funded. Level 1 funding provides a bursary to students who work in partnership with staff during semester time (maximum 30 contact hours over 10 weeks). Level 2 funding is more substantial where students receive bursaries and work full-time in collaboration with staff on key projects over eight weeks during the summer. As a testament to the impact and success of these projects, of the 9 innovations short-listed for the RCSI Education Innovation Award 2021 (one award annually), 6 resulted from student partnership initiatives (of these, 4 were StEP-funded projects) with the winning innovation being the StEP-funded project that led to an online auscultation resource for students and staff.



**RCSI StEP Communications** – during the reporting period this included profiling of the StEP programme on the RCSI [website](#) and launch of the RCSI StEP Twitter account: @RCSI\_StEP

A particular highlight of the StEP programme in 2020-2021 was the launch of the inaugural RCSI Student Leadership Development Programme. Students and staff worked collaboratively on its design and development. The programme, underpinned by the [NHS Clinical Leadership Competency Framework](#), focuses on ‘Domain I: Demonstrating Personal Qualities’ and ‘Domain II: Working with Others’. In the planning phase, it had a particular emphasis on ‘Development of Influential Leadership Skills’. As a direct result of a consultative process with Student Council, additional sections were added covering ‘Equality, Diversity and Inclusion’; ‘Self-Care and Resilience as Leaders’ and ‘Data Protection’. In 2020-2021, 62 students completed this programme, receiving Certificates of Achievement and digital badges. Anonymous survey feedback from students was very positive, with 95% of respondents reporting they felt better equipped to take up leadership roles.

Another positive student partnership in 2020-2021 resulted in a review of the Terms of References of all RCSI committees to ensure students were represented. This review resulted in the establishment of an open, inclusive and equal opportunities policy for the recruitment of students onto RCSI committees. This is currently the subject of a peer-review publication under review with students and staff as co-authors.

To conclude, we have endeavoured to abide by our student partnership definition, placing students as equal key partners in institutional key decision-making processes, in their education and research and in serving our wider communities. As our students are our future healthcare professionals, our aspiration is that patients will ultimately benefit as a result of proactive student engagement in RCSI.



#### 4.2.3 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

RCSI has identified [Equality, Diversity & Inclusion](#) (EDI) as one of the three foundational elements of its [Strategic Plan 2018-2022](#), together with Quality and Reputation. Given that the work of RCSI is driven by an unrelenting focus on quality and reputation, and that our relationships are based firmly upon equality, diversity & inclusion, these elements are also the measure of success in implementing the Strategic Plan.

The RCSI Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy 2018-2022 sets out a road map for EDI and serves as a proactive and collaborative framework for advancing the EDI agenda at RCSI. It recognizes that EDI must be embedded across all functions of the University so that each individual can make the most of their lives and talents. The Strategy is determined by the RCSI community of students and staff, and is derived from a comprehensive needs assessment which took place in 2017/18 to identify key equality, diversity and inclusion issues. The needs assessment identified structures and initiatives needed to support EDI, identified areas of inequality and prioritised areas for action, so that all members of the RCSI community have an equal opportunity to flourish.

The initiatives undertaken by RCSI in the area of EDI were recognized in 2018 by an Athena SWAN Institutional Bronze Award. In the 2020-2021 period, additional recognition came through two further Athena SWAN Departmental/School Bronze Awards to the Department of Physiology and Medical Physics, and the School of Pharmacy and Biomolecular Sciences.

Three new EDI staff and student forums were established during this academic year; Access of All; Ending Sexual Violence, Supporting Survivors, Promoting Consent (ESP) and Race Equality. Built on the principle

of staff student partnership and engagement, forums are tasked with developing and implementing actions plans for specific EDI priority areas.

In line with the Government's Consent Framework (2019), RCSI published a three-year [ESP Action Plan](#) in March 2021. The University partnered with the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre to deliver further training to frontline support staff and student leaders, in addition to Bystander Intervention training and Receiving a Disclosure training. Ninety percent of first year students completed RCSI's online consent training in 2020.

Advancing [race equality](#) was another EDI priority in 2020-21. RCSI was involved in the development of the first national Race Equality in Higher Education survey in Ireland, in November 2020. In January 2021, the first Race Equality Forum meeting of forty-two staff and students was convened. A Race Equality Action Plan will be launched in 2021-22 academic year.

In May 2021 the EDI in Higher Education e-learning tool, a comprehensive foundation course for staff, was launched. This was developed over a four-year period in partnership with the Irish University Association (IUA) and reviewed by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, as well as a number of civil society partners. This builds on the extensive EDI training programme already available to staff and students with over 600 students and 50 staff completing the programme in 2020-21.

An extensive calendar of EDI awareness raising events during the reporting period included a hugely successful Ensuring Women's Voices Are Heard in Media campaign, online Pride and Positive Ageing Week celebrations, International Men's Day and World AIDS Day. RCSI also welcomed guest speakers and EDI advocates including Adam Harris, Emma Dabiri, Dearbhail McDonald, Dr Ruth Freeman, Noelle O' Reilly, Adam Shanley, Vanessa Lacey, Aranee Manoharan and Dr Karl Neff.

The second [PROGRESS Women in Surgery Fellowship](#) was awarded in 2021. The fellowship provides a bursary worth €45,000 to promote female participation in surgical training at an international centre of excellence outside Ireland for a period of one year.

Eleven women from RCSI completed the Aurora, Advance HE's leadership development initiative for women and those who identify as a woman, in 2020-21. Training was also provided to staff and students in areas including cultural competence, Irish Sign Language, Lámh, neurodiversity, unconscious bias and Trans 101.

The RCSI Access for All Forum was re-launched in 2021. This forum is responsible for the finalisation, implementation and monitoring of a dedicated Access for All Action Plan and Policy.

RCSI is committed to building an inclusive learning and work environment where all students and staff can reach their full potential. Through the initiatives described above and many others, RCSI is embedding equality, diversity and inclusion, eradicating inequality and discrimination and ensuring that RCSI is a place where every member of the RCSI community feels welcome and that they belong.

**Glossary**

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>AC</b>	Academic Council
<b>APM</b>	Annual Programme Monitoring
<b>A&amp;QC</b>	Awards & Qualifications Committee
<b>ARC</b>	Academic Review Committee
<b>CoMPPAS</b>	(RCSI's) Centre for Mastery: Personal, Professional & Academic Success
<b>DAB</b>	Designated Awarding Body
<b>ECTS</b>	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
<b>HEA</b>	Higher Education Authority
<b>HEI</b>	Higher Education Institution
<b>HPEC</b>	Health Professions Education Centre
<b>IHEQN</b>	Irish Higher Education Quality Network
<b>IMC</b>	Irish Medical Council
<b>IRWG</b>	Institutional Review Working Group
<b>IUQB</b>	Irish Universities Quality Board
<b>LP</b>	Linked Provider
<b>MGP</b>	Medical Graduate Profile
<b>MHSB</b>	Medicine & Health Sciences Board
<b>MMC</b>	Malaysian Medical Council (Statutory Accreditation Body)
<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>MQA</b>	Malaysian Qualifications Agency
<b>NFQ</b>	National Framework of Qualifications (Ireland)
<b>NMBI</b>	Nursing & Midwifery Board of Ireland (Statutory Accreditation Body)
<b>NQAI</b>	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland
<b>NUI</b>	National University of Ireland
<b>ORI</b>	Office of Research & Innovation
<b>PGSU</b>	Postgraduate Students' Union
<b>PRSB</b>	Professional Regulatory and Statutory Body
<b>PSI</b>	Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (Statutory Accreditation Body)

<b>PU</b>	Perdana University (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)
<b>QC</b>	Quality Committee
<b>QEO</b>	Quality Enhancement Office
<b>QAC</b>	Quality Assurance Committee
<b>QQI</b>	Quality & Qualifications Ireland
<b>SARA</b>	Student Academic & Regulatory Affairs (Registry)
<b>RUMC</b>	RCSI – UCD Malaysia Campus (Penang, Malaysia)
<b>SLG</b>	Senior Leaders Group
<b>SMT</b>	RCSI Senior Management Team
<b>SPFB</b>	Surgery & Postgraduate Faculties Board
<b>SPGS</b>	School of Postgraduate Studies
<b>StEP</b>	Student Engagement and Partnership
<b>SU</b>	Students' Union
<b>UCD</b>	University College Dublin