RCSI, University of Medicine and Health Sciences

2025

Annual Quality Report
RCSI, University of Medicine & Health Sciences
Reporting Period 2023-2024

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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 <u>material</u> changes to QA policies and procedures during the reporting period. Such changes may include the approval and implementation of new polices 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[1]

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

PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Table 1

Table 1 Mapping of ESG (2015) to QQI QA Guidelines (QAG)				
AQR Part A Section	QQI QAG Core Sub-section No.	QAG Core Sub-section Title	ESG Standard No.	ESG Standard Title
1.0 - *Internal QA Framework*	2.1	Governance and Management of Quality	1.1	Policy for Quality Assurance
	2.2	Documented Approach to Quality Assurance		
2.0 - *Programme Development and Delivery*	2.3	Programmes of Education and Training	1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
4.0 - *QA of Research Activities and Programmes*				
8.0 - *Monitoring and Periodic Review*			1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
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*				
9.0 - *Details of Arrangements with Third Parties*			1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
2.0 - *Programme Development and Delivery*	2.11	Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - *Monitoring and Periodic Review*			1.10	Cyclical External Quality Assurance
4.0 - *QA of Research Activities and Programmes*	QAG for Providers of Research Degree Programmes			

Introduction and Overview of Institution

This is the AQR for RCSI, University of Medicine & Health Sciences, for the reporting period **1 September 2023 – 31 August 2024.** It is to be submitted by **Friday, 28 February 2025.**It is to be submitted by **Friday, 28 February 2025.** The AQR has been approved by **the RCSI Quality Committee** and is submitted by **Aisling Reast, Head of the Quality Enhancement Office.**
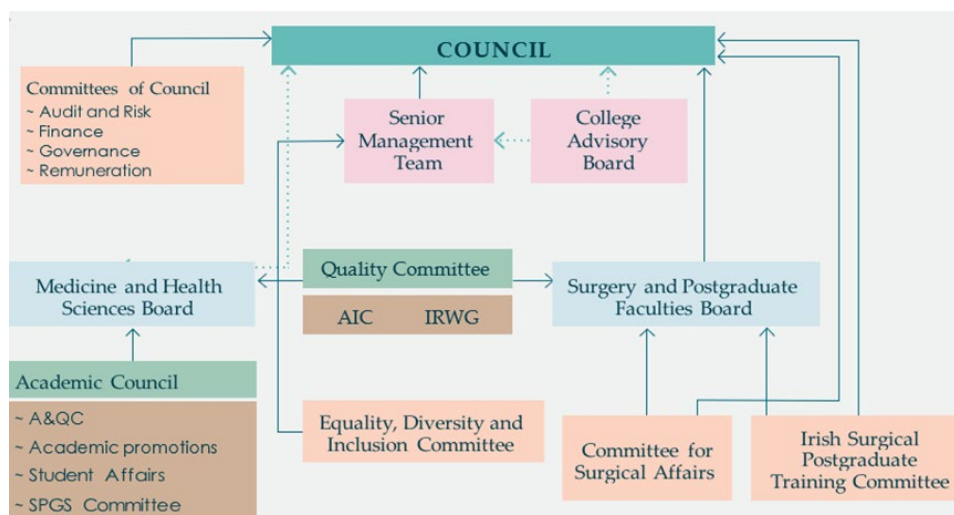
The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) was established by Royal Charter in 1784 to set and support professional standards for surgical training and practice in Ireland. RCSI has evolved considerably in the intervening years and is now both a university and a postgraduate training body in the areas of medicine and health sciences. 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. RCSI awards undergraduate and postgraduate degrees including those leading to qualifications in Medicine, Pharmacy, Physiotherapy, Advanced Therapeutic Technologies and Physician Associates in Dublin; Medicine and Nursing in Bahrain; Medicine in Penang (RUMC- RCSI & UCD Malaysia Campus), and masters (taught & by research) and doctoral programmes variously in Ireland, Bahrain, China and Malaysia. RCSI became a Recognised College of the National University of Ireland (NUI) in 1978. 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 was granted university status, pursuant to the provisions of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Amendment Act 2019.

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

1.0 Internal QA Framework

1.1 Governance and Management of Quality

RCSI is an independent, not-for-profit statutory body and university under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Amendment Act 2019. The current structure is summarised below.

Under the terms of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (Charters Amendment) Act 2003 and earlier statutory enactments, the primary governing body of the RCSI is the Council. The overarching role of the Council is to provide governance to ensure that the College adheres to its Noble Purpose: "Building on our heritage in surgery, we will enhance human health, through endeavour, innovation and collaboration in education, research and service." There are 4 standing committees of Council: Audit and Risk Committee, Finance Committee, Remuneration Committee and the Governance and Nominations Committee. The Senior Management Team (SMT) is responsible for the management, operation and executive oversight of the institution. The College Advisory Board (CAB) provides Council and the Senior Management Team with external perspectives and advice on critical strategic decisions; it does not have decision-making authority.

In 2010, Council devolved power to two Boards to oversee the main educational, training and research activities of RCSI; the Medicine and Health Sciences Board (MHSB) now responsible for university affairs and Surgery and Postgraduate Faculties Board (SPFB) for professional training affairs. The Medicine and Health Sciences Board is the governing body for all RCSI educational programmes leading to NFQ awards. It exercises its oversight of these activities through the Academic Council. Academic Council is responsible for the implementation of policy set by the MHSB. It is the senior academic and administrative forum for deliberation on all academic matters. The Awards & Qualifications Committee (A&QC) has authority and operational responsibility, delegated from the MHSB, to evaluate and consider programmes which fall under the NFQ for approval and accreditation. SPFB coordinates the common activities of Surgical Affairs and the Postgraduate Faculties. The Board facilitates knowledge exchange and coordination, as well as contributing to strategy development, across Surgery and the Postgraduate Faculties.

The Quality Committee (QC) is responsible for the creation of policy and for the implementation of quality processes and quality assurance/quality improvement activities across RCSI. QC reports to both the SPFG and the MHSB and has two standing sub-committees reporting to it, the Academic Integrity Committee (AIC) and the Institutional Review Working Group (IRWG). The AIC was initially established as the Academic Integrity

Working Group, 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. During the reporting period, its status was changed to a committee to reflect the ongoing importance of Academic Integrity to RCSI. The IRWG is responsible for the management of Institutional Reviews conducted by QQI. The QC also plays a significant role in integrating QA activities on overseas campuses into the overall QA system, and in supporting these campuses in their interactions with local QA/QI structures and processes. RCSI Bahrain has a local Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC). A report on its activities is presented at each QC, and the Chair of the QEC and the Head of Quality and Academic Development are members of the QC.

The QEO is the executive function of the RCSI Quality Committee 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 delivery. The QEO has five members of staff; the Head of the QEO, the Director of Psychometrics, the Quality Reviews Manager, the QA/QI Analyst and the Quality Assurance Administrator. The Head of the QEO reports to the Chair of the Quality Committee who is the RCSI Vice Chancellor & CEO. The QC and QEO contribute to institutional strategic planning by routinely providing key data to RCSI governance structures and Senior Management Team, including primarily (i) student and staff satisfaction and engagement data derived from ongoing survey activity, and (ii) the insights and recommendations arising from internal QA reviews.

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; these include:
- External members on governing boards and advisory committees (including MHSB, SPFB, CAB, Quality Committee, etc.).
- External members of Peer Review Groups in Internal Quality Assurance Reviews.
- External members of Programmatic Review Panels.
- External Examiners for educational programmes leading to the award of degrees (appointed jointly by RCSI & NUI).
- External members of accreditation panels visiting RCSI on behalf of the Professional Regulatory Statutory Bodies.
- Public and patient representatives on relevant education and research committees and school external advisory boards.

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

RCSI is committed to carrying out research to the highest standards of professionalism and scientific rigour and, to that end, has a comprehensive suite of policies and procedures governing research activity and its quality assurance developed by the Office of Research & Innovation (ORI) and the School of Postgraduate Studies (SPGS). The policies and procedures developed and implemented by the ORI cover all aspects of

research practice including research ethics, the acquisition and management of funding, publication policy, bibliometric indices, etc.; these are contained in the 'Researchers' Handbook', a comprehensive document available to all researchers and research support staff. All policies are subject to regular review and updating as required. These documents are disseminated to students and staff via the Staff Portal and virtual learning environment. The SPGS manages all research programmes leading to higher degree awards. The SPGS Committee is responsible for overall governance and management of the School. The Postgraduate Programme Management Committee, which has responsibility for policy oversight and engagement with the academic directors of all taught postgraduate programmes in RCSI, and the Academic Review Committee (ARC), which reviews all new applications for research degrees. This process ensures efficient and timely registration of new students with quality research proposals. Both committees 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 the SPGS, the PhD programme was reviewed in 2012 and the MD programme was reviewed in 2018. The Quality Enhancement Office (QEO) also carries out reviews of Schools, Faculties and Professional Services Units within RCSI. The Office of Research and Innovation participated in an Internal Quality Review in November 2021.
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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 does not currently have any Linked Providers.

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

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

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

2.0 Programme Development and Delivery

2.1 Programme Development and Approval

The RCSI Awards & Qualifications Committee is responsible for the approval and validation of new educational programmes leading to RCSI degree awards aligned with the National Framework of Qualifications, encompassing the quality assurance of their design. It is also responsible for the revalidation of existing programmes to which Minor or Major Changes are proposed. 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.

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

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

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

Reaccreditations and changes to existing programmes are evaluated by the A&QC according to 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, with final approval by Academic Council, MHSB and NUI Senate. Minor changes are subject to a less extensive review.

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). 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.
c)   No Confidence with consequent discontinuation of the degree programme.

2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification

RCSI's undergraduate admissions are managed by the undergraduate admissions office and post graduate admissions are managed by the school of postgraduate studies or the relevant school. Admission to RCSI is guided by the admission policies published on the RCSI website.

Policies related to admissions include:
- Admissions Policy
- Policy for admitting students under 18 years of age
- Statement of confidentiality & declaration of interest pertaining to admissions
- Data protection policy
- Disability policy
- Fitness to practice information
- Feedback pertaining to admission
- Statement of fraud pertaining to admission
- Disclosure of criminal information
- Statement of infectious diseases and general health procedures
- Admissions complaints and appeals process

The admissions offices have overall responsibility, working through Academic Council, for the admission of students into the University. Undergraduate EU students, with the exception of graduate pharmacy and physiotherapy, apply via the CAO. EU graduate Pharmacy and Physiotherapy apply directly to undergraduate admission office. EU applicants with European qualifications are assessed using the EU Quals document, Entry requirements criteria for EU/EFTA/UK Applicants (other than Irish Leaving Certificate). The university is committed to widening access and is part of the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR), and Disability Access Route to Education (DARE).
Non-EU qualifications are assessed using NARIC. Non-EU students from across the globe apply directly to RCSI, with the exception of those based in the USA or Canada in the year of application. North American applicants apply through the USA based admissions office, Atlantic Bridge. This North American based application office has been in place for over 30 years and has served the large volume of applicants from the USA & Canada who benefit from having access to well informed admissions staff, on similar North American time zones, who can speak to perspective applicants about the application process, the academic course that they are interested in applying to and the pathway back to residency and practice in the USA and Canada.

The Admissions Office works very closely with Marketing, Student Recruitment and Student Services Office. With the latter managing the Student Accommodation Service and coordinating the Orientation and Registration process for new incoming students. The Student Recruitment Office work alongside Marketing to create awareness of RCSI and the academic programmes that are offered. Information for students, parents and school counsellors is available in multiple formats, including website, prospectus, in person and online open events and webinars, school visits, school counsellor engagement and educational fairs.

When students receive offers to join the university, they are provided with access to a website designed to onboard students. The RCSEye platform is designed specifically for new incoming students to RCSI, offering a space to connect, find accommodation, and access essential information on various aspects of their respective programmes, as well as student life and settling in Dublin. Tailored exclusively for RCSI newcomers, the site provides a range of resources such as webinars, chat groups, and other tools to help students engage with university life and build connections even before their arrival.

For new incoming students, document submission is completed in advance to facilitate ease of registration. Undergraduate students receive their IT network login and RCSI email account details prior to induction. Students are also provided with links to useful IT training videos to help familiarisation with IT systems such as Blackboard Collaborate and Moodle. Ongoing student registration is predominantly completed online.

Induction & Orientation is an important part of the settling in process for new students joining RCSI. This takes place during the first few weeks of the academic year. The Student Services Office, partnering with the Admissions & Student Recruitment Office, oversees the delivery of this service. It commences with registration for all new undergraduate students. It involves a series of presentations introducing students to various facilities and services within the university including CoMPPAS (Centre for Mastery: Personal, Professional & Academic Success), IT, Financial Supports, Student Health, Library, Health & Safety, Students Union, Clubs & Societies and Sports Facilities. Students are set up with their laptops and are issued with their RCSI student cards, which give access to the RCSI campus.

Depending on the programme of study or cohort, RCSI postgraduate research students are provided with an online induction programme within one month of their programme registration. A welcome handbook is also provided (via Moodle), detailing information and supports for living in Ireland and studying at RCSI. An in-person induction day takes place each November, which includes a 'Coating Ceremony'. All MCh, MSc, MD and PhDs registered from the previous January are invited.

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. Transfers, in some circumstances, are permitted between RCSI Postgraduate Research (PGR) Programmes (e.g. MD to PhD). All other transfer requests are managed using RCSI's policy on Recognition of Prior Learning.

Progression, on all programmes, is determined by Marks and Standards documents. These documents outline the standards and criteria which must be satisfied to progress to the next stage of the programme. These are made available to students via the Moodle virtual learning environment, together with policies on the relevant appeals processes. Progression in PGR programmes at NFQ level 10 is subject to completion of an annual progress review assessed by two content experts. Progression rates and graduate numbers are reported by Registry.

Students' grades are delivered to them directly, and on a confidential basis, electronically (via Student Gateway, Moodle, Kaizen or email) as soon as is practicable following the relevant Examinations Board meeting. At the end of each academic year, students are sent a cumulative transcript of their results. These

transcripts provide an overall module result for all modules taken by that student to date.   An annual transcript is also provided to sponsoring bodies for each of their students which provide an overall module result for all modules taken by that student in the relevant academic year only.

RCSI has a particular commitment to underline widening participation in its educational programmes (see also Part B Section 2.0) and offers a range of underline scholarships. Of particular note in this regard are the are the Aim High Medicine, Kiran Pathak Pharmacy and Traveller and Roma Communities Access Scholarship, which aims to increase the participation of members of the Traveller and Roma communities in the University's undergraduate programmes.   These scholarships provide reduced points entry, financial support and opportunities for students who might otherwise be unable to attend third level education. Through support from the HEA Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH 5), RCSI Engage is working collaboratively with UCD Access and Trinity Access Programme on a three-year funded project that aims to increase Traveller and Roma communities' participation in Higher Education with a dedicated Access Officer working across the three HEIs. RCSI participates in HEAR and DARE with 12% of RCSI's CAO places offered on reduced points to eligible DARE/HEAR applicants.

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).

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 many award-stage assessments in particular, assessment systems are required to incorporate standard setting methods to determine appropriate pass/fail cut-off points ('cut-scores'). In the health sciences, and particularly for high-stakes assessments, international best practice involves the use of standard setting methods that are test-centred or examinee-centred, and that factor the judgement of experts into the process of determining the cut-score. Thus, RCSI programmes typically use test-centred

standard setting methods for MCQ-based tests of knowledge (e.g., the Bookmark & Angoff methods) and examinee-centred methods for tests of skills & attitudes (e.g., the Borderline Regression method for Objective Structured Clinical Examinations).

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

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

2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

The quality assurance of teaching, learning & assessment in educational programmes leading to RCSI degree awards is managed on an ongoing basis by academic schools, internal governance committees, examination boards and Registry functions, through the monitoring and analysis of multiple data streams:
- Student feedback surveys (semester or module-based)
- Meetings with student representatives
- In-course examination results (semester- or academic year-based)
- Exit (*i.e.,* final end of programme) examination results
- External examiners' reports
- Accreditation reports issued by the relevant Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies
- Annual Programme Monitoring
- Programmatic Review reports

Student feedback surveys run by the Quality Enhancement Office (QEO) provide an overview of perceptions of the student experience, particularly in relation to teaching, learning & assessment. RCSI's survey approach is to apply a centralised core and options model of evaluation across all undergraduate courses and campuses and most postgraduate courses. The use of 'core' questions allows the direct comparison of student experience between instances of the same programme on different sites, between programmes and over time. The use of 'optional' questions allows for the specific/targeted collection of information, e.g., students' reaction to a new teaching intervention. The vital role played by the QEO ensures that the data is collected, processed and reported in a consistent way that allows for an in-depth analysis and protects the confidentiality of students' views and their anonymity. 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 the content is delivered by discrete semesters, or on a module-by-module basis. Year/Programme Directors use this information in conjunction with academic performance and other data to determine what (if any) changes need to be made for the subsequent year. This information should be communicated back to the students by the Schools at the start of the next academic year in the form of a Quality Improvement Plan either verbally (during one of the first lectures of the year) or via the Moodle virtual learning environment. The quantitative survey response data are made available directly to students via Moodle shortly after the data has been processed. In addition to the curriculum feedback, separate reports are prepared for the heads of professional services functions – for example the RCSI Library, Student Academic and Regulatory Affairs, CoMPPAS, IT Department. Additionally, to close the feedback loop, the QEO implements a process to centralise the collection and reporting of quality improvement actions. Annually, schools and professional departments are requested to provide examples of good practice and actions undertaken in response to student feedback to the Quality Enhancement Repository. A thematic analysis of the actions is conducted by the QEO and presented at an annual internal

conference. The Repository content is also used to develop a 'You said, we did' campaign for the next academic year. A separate loop closing process is implemented in RCSI Bahrain.

Externally, feedback on student engagement is normally collected independently from first and final year undergraduate students and from postgraduate taught and research students via StudentSurvey.ie (currently on hold). 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.

For programmes following the standardised academic session of Sept-Aug, regulations regarding assessment are finalised and approved by MHSB each May, in advance of the following academic session and are made available to students in the form of 'Marks & Standards' documents. These documents contain information about the format, quantity and weighting of assessments as well as details about progression and remediation policies and procedures. The results of all assessments are subject to review by a range of stakeholders at all stages of the assessment process. Academic and administrative staff review raw performance data for anomalies before data is processed. RCSI has a system of internal moderation which takes place after all summative assessments and in advance of Examination Board meetings. This process of internal moderation demonstrates that best practice is applied consistently across RCSI in its assessments. For first sitting assessments, a representative sample of the cohort is moderated, and this includes a higher proportion of work that has been first marked as a 'fail' or at the 'borderline' between marking/grading bands. For supplemental assessments a representative sample of the cohort must include all failing scripts. External examiners are appointed to participate in the assessment review process as well as having an input into progression decisions. 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. If a student believes that a decision is the result of a procedural irregularity, or if they if they possess evidence of relevant exceptional circumstances which was not available to the original decision makers when its decision was reached, RCSI has a well-developed appeals procedure.

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

As a health sciences university and postgraduate/professional training body, many RCSI educational and training programmes are subject to accreditation by the relevant Professional Regulatory and Statutory Bodies (PRSBs). These are the Irish Medical Council, the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland, CORU (The Health & Social Care Professions Regulator), the Nursing & Midwifery Board of Ireland and, recently, the Dental Council. Each PRSB typically undertakes periodic monitoring and accreditation site-inspections 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 currently provides for Annual Programme Monitoring of transnational, collaborative and franchise programmes.

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

RCSI, through the programmes offered by the Health Professions Education Centre (HPEC), endeavours to ensure that all academic staff are actively engaged in the quality assurance and enhancement of their own teaching and assessment activities. Peer observation of teaching is an integral component to educator development at RCSI. HPEC leads the RCSI's active and collaborative peer observation programme; hundreds of staff have availed of this opportunity since its introduction in 2015. HPEC has also partnered with other HEIs on a pilot of inter-institutional peer observation of teaching.

HPEC offers RCSI staff members access to a formal educational qualification through a Postgraduate Diploma in Health Professions Education. This is a one-year, Level 9, 60-credit course which covers four modules: Introduction to Health Professions Education; Principles of Learning and Teaching; Assessment and Feedback in Health Professions Education and Curriculum Design and Evaluation. Completion of this programme (or equivalent) is normally expected for promotion to senior lecturer. HPEC also supports RCSI's community of educators through an online platform which connects them to diverse faculty development services. These include an "always on" library of video-recordings and "how to?" articles, short online courses and a system to book in with HPEC staff for one-to-one consultations on educational practice and research. HPEC host live educational sessions in the form of bespoke in-person and online training workshops, and regular Educational Hub sessions that highlight in-house and visiting speakers. HPEC coordinates and advises on education research strategies which relate to the evaluation of programmes and other curricula development. This includes studies which examine case-based learning, RCSI graduates' preparedness for practice, and the use of simulated patients to facilitate communication skills learning in undergraduate cohorts.

RCSI espouses the highest standards of professionalism among students, graduates, postgraduate trainees, Members and Fellows. Academic Integrity – showing respect for the work of others and acting with honesty and responsibility in preparing and submitting coursework – is a key component of professionalism. Registry, working with the schools, faculties and the Academic Integrity Committee, maintain a comprehensive suite of documents setting out RCSI policy concerning professionalism, code of conduct, behaviour in examinations, academic integrity, etc. In addition, an RCSI Academic Working Group was established in September 2020 as formal structure to monitor and respond to initiatives launched by National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) and Quality & Qualifications Ireland (QQI) around Academic Integrity. The working group has now been afforded Committee status and 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 to internal quality review, the output of which is a quality improvement plan (QIP) based on recommendations of the review panel informed by the evidence gathered from students, staff and other stakeholders. QIPs are published on the RCSI website.

The RCSI Dublin city centre campus received a major enhancement in 2018 with 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 SIM Centre for Simulation Education & Research, the RCSI library, a sports hall and fitness suite, and has been designed to be both energy efficient and environmentally responsible. In 2018, RCSI also completed Phase 2 of the Education and Research Centre (ERC) on the Beaumont Hospital campus. ERC Phase 2 provided an additional 30,000 sq. ft. of space incorporating a new student concourse at ground floor level to link the new facility with the existing building. The structure includes a series of flexible multi-functional tutorial rooms, open-plan faculty offices and meeting spaces on the first floor, with laboratory and research facilities on the second floor.

During the reporting period, RCSI completed a new €30 million ERC at Connolly Hospital Blanchardstown. The three-storey building is designed with two distinct interlocking blocks for academic, faculty and administration functions, with a communal atrium area linking the two, providing amenity and support space for students and staff. The building contains a 200-seat auditorium, 12 tutorial rooms and a lecture theatre. A new Simulation facility has been provided in addition to an 8-bed clinical research facility. The HSE are also relocating the Connolly Hospital Laboratories to the building, which will provide further opportunities for research and teaching collaborations between RCSI and Connolly Hospital. The project was completed on target in September 2024 and feedback to date from students and staff has been extremely positive.

RCSI also continued work on the transformational development at 118 St Stephen's Green during this period. The next phase of RCSI's campus development in Dublin city centre is a €95m expansion project. Also known as Project Connect, it will enrich the student experience at RCSI and provide vital infrastructure for pioneering health sciences research and innovation, as well as creating a space for local community engagement. A key design element of 118 St Stephen's Green is its physical link to RCSI's presence at 26 York Street, significantly opening up RCSI's education space for the estimated 3,000 students and staff who visit the campus daily. The development will include new concepts such as learning community spaces, small group teaching spaces as well as flexible flat floor teaching spaces. Another key purpose of the project is to enhance RCSI's research and innovation activities, providing up to three floors of state-of-the-art laboratory, write-up and support facilities for existing and new research programmes and initiatives. This new facility is due to be completed in June 2025.

During the reporting period, RCSI also commenced the redevelopment of Reservoir House, Sandyford as the foundation Dental Education Centre (DEC) to support the planned commencement of RCSI's new Bachelor of

Dental Surgery (BDS) Programme in September 2025. This €12M investment will provide state of the art dental education and simulated learning environments for the new dentistry students. In addition, RCSI is progressing plans for a major €33M DEC in Connolly Hospital. Planning permission has been secured for this development with a target commencement date in early 2025, for completion in 2027.

RCSI Library Service provides resources, services and facilities to support the learning, teaching, research and clinical activities of the university (see summary diagram below). Online resources and services to RCSI staff and students are described and accessible via the library website. Focused on health sciences, the working collections are largely online and include an extensive range of biomedical databases, online textbooks, clinical summary point of care tools and electronic journals. The library discovery platform, PrimoVE, enables students and staff to search across, and retrieve items from all online and print collections. Through RCSI membership of the Irish Research eLibrary (IReL) consortium, the nationally funded e-resource licensing consortium, RCSI staff and students have access to additional leading Science Technology and Medicine (STM) and Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) resources. RCSI authors (including student authors) also benefit from open access agreements with publishers facilitated by IReL that typically allow RCSI corresponding authors to publish their articles open access, immediately on publication, without payment. On-site services and facilities at the award-winning library in the city-centre campus include diverse spaces designed to support individual and group learning and small collections of print books and textbooks. Similar facilities at the RCSI Library in Beaumont Hospital are available to hospital-based students and staff. Library health information specialists assist learners in finding, evaluating, using, and managing information as the basis of evidence-based practice and support development of these skills by providing curriculum-integrated training, dedicated customer services teams at on-site and virtual information desks, and through online guides. Postgraduate students and faculty can avail themselves of bespoke research consultations with expert library staff via email, MS Teams, Blackboard Collaborate or conference call. The full suite of library learning support materials is available for review on Moodle, the RCSI virtual learning environment. Research outputs, and eligible dissertations and theses are available on the RCSI open access repository.

Education	Impactful Research	Engagement	Contribution

Learning Support Services
✓ Library skills curriculum teaching
  Embedded workshops, lectures, classes
  Assignment related referencing clinics
✓ Student Choice module
  Pathologies in Time
✓ Extra-curricular teaching
  Bite Size sessions and recordings
✓ Information point
  Enquiries, support, advice
✓ Research & consultation service
  Specialised queries for staff & students
 	
Resources to Support Learning
✓ Electronic resources
  Databases, clinical summaries, journals, e-books
✓ Library-authored support materials
  Videos, Library Guides, manuals
✓ Physical collections
  Books, journals, DVDs
 	
Spaces to Support Learning
✓ Virtual spaces
  Website
  Library Guides
  RCSI Library on Moodle
  YouTube Channel
✓ Physical places
  Group study rooms
  Study pods
  Amphitheatre
  Reading lounges
  Computer rooms
	Research Services
	✓ RCSI open access research repository
	✓ Bibliometrics support in cooperation with Office of Institutional Research & Planning
	✓ Individual author profiling & metrics
	✓ Advanced literature searching & systematic review support services
	✓ Advisory services on scholarly publishing including copyright and licensing, where to publish, open access publishing
	✓ Research data management support, including data management planning, FAIR data, archiving and related issues
	✓ Individual / research group / departmental consultations
	
	Training to Support Research
	✓ For Impact:
	  Individual bibliometrics
	  Journal metrics
	✓ Increasing Your Visibility: online profiles in ORCID, SCOPUS, etc.
	✓ Open Access publishing and RCSI Repository
	✓ Using SciVal
	✓ Altmetrics
	✓ FAIR Data
	✓ Data Management Planning
	✓ Advanced search techniques for systematic reviews
	
	Resources to Support Research
	✓ Electronic Collections
	  Databases, journals, bibliometric analysis tools, DMPOnline, Endnote
	✓ Library-authored support materials
		User Engagement
		✓ Proactive promotion of library resources, services and facilities via outreach activities in situ and social media
		✓ Experiential space
		  Expo Stage & Study Pods in the Library Learning Commons support neutral peer to peer engagement and non-academic activities
		✓ Customer service excellence
		  Listening & User Experience Methodologies informs service improvements and developments; Customer Voice feeds into service
		✓ Relationships & Collaboration
		  Primary collaborators with Estates, IT, Student Services, CoMPASS, Office of Research & Innovation, Office of Institutional Research & Planning, Health Professionals Education Centre, Communications & Events, Beaumont Hospital, Alumni & Development; Schools SU/Class Reps
		
		Public engagement
		✓ Culture Night, Heritage Week, Archives Week, ERASMUS Exchange Week, Library Ireland Week, Public Seminars & exhibitions, Social media & Heritage Blog
		✓ Fact checking and source material for RCSI events and VIPs
			Primary Function
			✓ Management and business owner of systems & services to enable discovery, curation and preservation of institutional information assets past and present
			
			RCSI Internal Committees
			✓ Academic Council
			✓ Art Committee
			✓ Awards & Qualifications Committee
			✓ Student Affairs Committee
			✓ FAIR Data Committee
			✓ EDI Committee
			✓ Teaching & Learning Committee
			✓ Climate Health & Sustainability Committee
			✓ EDI Fora
			
			External Committees &Memberships
			✓ CONUL Board & sub-groups
			✓ National Open Research Forum & working groups
			✓ IReL & Advisory & Negotiations Groups
			✓ SCONUL (UK) Board and sub-groups
			✓ LIBER (Europe)
			✓ AAHSL (North America)

The RCSI SIM Centre for Simulation Education and Research enables RCSI's mission by delivering transformative learning experiences and leading impactful research. Through collaboration, learner-centeredness, and patient focus, it strives to enable excellent, outcomes-based, translational education and research. The centre is accredited by the Network of Accredited Skills Centres in Europe (NASCE). The multi-purpose surgical training suite, the fully functioning mock operating theatre, a mock emergency room and

mock labour ward provide authentic settings for immersive team training. Each area is equipped with the audio-visual learning system (CAE LearningSpace) to provide video assisted 360 feedback and video support after event reflection. A particular strength of RCSI SIM lies with the simulated participant (SP) programme, over 100 individuals who support a wide array of curricula at RCSI, both for training and assessment. In line with international best practice, trained SPs facilitate the delivery of consistent repeated educational experiences, which allow learners reach competence through deliberate and repeated practice. The centre incorporates:

- Ten outpatient consultation rooms where simulated participants (professional actors & lay volunteers who have undertaken specific in-house training) assist in developing students' consultation skills.
- Six hospital ward simulation rooms, which use high-fidelity manikins to develop students' clinical skills, as well as to build their confidence in dealing with emergency situations, such as complications during labour.
- A task training laboratory with a full range of teaching models, manikins, and task trainers (needle biopsy, insertion of IV lines, etc.).
- A large, fully equipped and multi-purpose wet lab accommodating up to 30 students or professional trainees.
- A large Surgical Simulator Suite accommodating 20 trainees, with an array of state-of-the-art augmented reality simulators and a hub for Robotic training courses.
- 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.
- An innovation lab to develop and support simulated-related projects to create bespoke physical simulation models, including design, material evaluation, prototyping, testing and production, to enable more authentic and accessible learning environments for technical staff, students, faculty, researchers and educators.

The breadth and reach of the RCSI SIM Centre's educational efforts encompass undergraduate, postgraduate, and continuing professional development across the institution. In 2023–2024, the RCSI SIM team supported over 52,000 hours of individual learner simulation training for both undergraduate and postgraduate learners.

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

System name	Role
CampusTIES	Student admission, registration
Quercus	Student academic records
Kaizen	Academic & welfare supports, real-time feedback, extra-curricular, grades
Turnitin	Academic integrity
In-Place	Placement management
Practique	Assessment and proctoring
Moodle	Learning Management System
Student Life HQ	Hub for students' clubs and societies

Student Pulse	Student feedback surveys
Career Hub	Careers support
Mentor Network	Enables students to engage with mentors
AKARI	Curriculum planning and mapping
Ungerboek	Timetabling
Blackboard Collaborate	Online lectures and tutorials
TurningPoint	Supporting lecture interaction
Bibliotheca	Self-service book borrowing/return and library account management
Sentry	Self-service group study room booking
Figshare	Theses & open access research repository
Springshare LibGuides	Online subject library guides
Primo VE	Searching across all library online & print resources
Springshare LibChat	Library online chat
MyRCSI	Student App

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

CoMPPAS is an integrated multi-disciplinary team of professionals and specialists providing a holistic support framework designed to support and empower students to achieve their personal, professional and academic goals. The range of professional services offered include Student Welfare & Wellbeing, Career Readiness, Learning Access & Facilitation (Disability), Academic Performance and Communication & Language. The welfare team is staffed by four CORU registered social workers who function as the student welfare officers. RCSI also engages several 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 nationally or internationally. Spectrum Health provides a global network of counselling services available 24/7 to both students and staff. For students pursuing medical residency programmes in their home countries, the team provides a tailored, step-by-step career pathway mapping service to ensure they are well-prepared for success. The Career Development Service empowers students through:

- One-to-one appointments, group briefings, and workshops: Personalised and interactive support sessions.
- Access to international career information: resources and insights into global healthcare career opportunities.
- Networking opportunities: building connections to enhance career prospects.
- Lifelong and cross-sectional career development: supported by the design your life programme (Case study 4).

Achieving academic success is an essential part of becoming a self-regulated, lifelong learner. Addressing academic challenges and identifying growth opportunities are critical steps in developing the skills needed to succeed as a healthcare professional. The Career Development Team also supports students in overcoming these challenges and fostering learning strategies for future success.

RCSI's extensive student services combine academic, professional, and personal development support with vibrant cultural and recreational offerings. This ensures students thrive in a dynamic, inclusive, and supportive environment throughout their time at RCSI. The Student Services Office focuses on non-academic aspects of student life to enhance the overall RCSI experience. Key offerings include:
1. Accommodation and immigration support e.g. guidance on securing housing and navigating visa and immigration requirements.
2. Financial assistance such as scholarships, support with unexpected hardship and emergency funding.
3. Fitness and recreation e.g. free access to gym facilities and fitness programs to promote physical well-being.
4. Student life enhancements including support for student-run organisations (such as sports clubs & societies, the Student Union, and student publications), management of merchandising, and organising student events to build community engagement.

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

The Student Services Office uses a variety of platforms to communicate with students. These include email, weekly newsletters, information screens (updated daily; college-wide), Student Life HQ, RCS-Eye, Student Services Website (used for Gym registration), Moodle, the Student Life Instagram Account, MyRCSI App (a wraparound app signposting all supports and services) and the RCSI website.

Student Life HQ was launched in October 2020 as a one-stop digital shop for all clubs, societies and student events. It features a real-time calendar with direct access to virtual events and activities and as a centralised hub to learn about, and sign up to, the 35 Sports Clubs and 53 Societies.
Several Handbooks/Guides are produced by Student Services. The Orientation Guide has been designed to provide students with information, direction, and advice in relation to life as a student at RCSI. It also serves to introduce student life in Dublin. The Clubs & Societies Handbook contains important safety advice and guidelines on how to run each club or society. The Safety Booklet advises students of simple, preventative measures which they can use to help to protect themselves from a distressing situation. The Gym Guide outlines the key services provided in the Gym.

The RCSI learning experience, by virtue of the student profile, requires full integration between students of all cultural backgrounds across all learning activities. As part of the induction programme, the CoMPPAS team run a number of large-scale welcome lunches to assist in student socialisation. Additionally, a comprehensive Peer to Peer mentoring programme makes immediately available 'near peer' support for students new to Dublin and Ireland. RCSI respects all religions and none; a non-denominational serenity room

and gender-specific Islamic prayer rooms are available on campus for students of all backgrounds who wish to avail of them. International student integration is encourage through a range of activities both specially created within RCSI and those available nationally, e.g. REACH RCSI; Student Ambassador Programme; RCSI International Citizenship Programme. The 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 English-speaking student population. The educational approach taken, due to our diverse student body and their needs, is best achieved through holistic and embedded means with additional learning facilities provided where required. This is achieved through a variety of avenues both inside the curriculum and as a co-curricular or as additional learning provision. Communication skills development for the international student body is provided for through a learning tool in a self-access format in a dedicated communication and language lab space. Ongoing development and management of technology-based, language and communication resources and laboratory learning environments is achieved through guidance from the Lecturer in Communications who guides the use of this space. 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.

The RCSI Strategic Plan 2018-2022 placed student partnership as a core strategic enabler in striving to transform healthcare education, research and service for the benefit of human health. In striving to achieve this, RCSI appointed a Deputy Dean for Student Engagement in 2018, and a university-wide RCSI Student Engagement and Partnership (StEP) Committee was subsequently established. A formal StEP programme was launched in 2020-2021 which includes (i) a definition of student partnership in the context of RCSI, (ii) a bespoke RCSI StEP framework, (iii) formal StEP Agreements, launched annually, between RCSI and the SU and PGSU teams, (iv) annual StEP project funding and (v) annual StEP Student Partnership Champion Awards.

As outlined in RCSI's current strategy, the StEP programme is now at the core of providing a distinctive and transformational educational experience that sets students up for success at RCSI and as future graduates. The programme defines and drives student engagement and partnership across all campus activities and touch points in the student journey, positively contributing to RCSI's institutional management and key decision-making processes, its educational and research programmes, and its local communities and social environment. As external validation of the university-wide culture of student engagement and partnership, RCSI was presented with the highly prestigious and internationally recognised AMEE ASPIRE-To-Excellence Award for Student Engagement in August 2022. RCSI was also awarded the Sunday Times University of the Year for Student Engagement 2022.

Public and patient involvement (PPI) in education is embedded throughout the RCSI student journey as they learn from expert patients who educate by sharing their stories, enabling understanding of the patient experience and supporting final-year exams. Simulated patients and actors portray the patient experience, assess and provide individualised feedback, enabling student reflection. Patients and the public also help to shape the future of RCSI education by getting involved in case design for interactive learning sessions, shaping curriculum, and through committee membership.

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. One of the key outputs of the StEP

programme in 2020-2021 was the development of a formal policy to provide for an open, transparent and inclusive process for the recruitment of student representatives onto its committees, working groups and fora, ensuring that all students have an equality opportunity to represent the student voice.

RCSI places a particular emphasis on the provision of support to students registered on online learning programmes at the University. These programmes are delivered by the postgraduate schools with support from the RCSI Online service. Students have access to high-quality digitally developed programmes through a tailored virtual learning environment, designed to facilitate a seamless and intuitive student journey, ensuring maximum engagement and the establishment of a learning community, regardless of location. The University's online programmes consist of both asynchronous and synchronous content supporting a self-paced and flexible educational experience. Student orientation is crucial to the onboarding process for these programmes, and the orientation programme is designed to prepare students for their learning journey and to ensure a quality and engaged student experience. Technical support is provided to learners to guide them, regardless of their level of technical ability. The onboarding process ensures that students can understand the context and requirements of the programme, can access the virtual learning environment and virtual classrooms and have completed all necessary exercises to ensure a smooth experience. Students are guided through the initial access and use of the software required to engage with the programme. Regular facilitated virtual drop-in sessions are scheduled for both students and adjunct faculty to encourage them to visit the virtual classrooms and to test accessibility and audio settings in advance of teaching sessions, and technical support is provided on an ongoing basis. From the outset, students have access to the programme schedule and are informed in a timely manner of any changes that need to be made. They are also made aware of the key contacts and people 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 support.

4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes

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

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

RCSI research postgraduate degree programmes [MSc, MCh, MD, PhD & Professional Doctorates] 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, Writing & Communication Skills, and Biostatistics (including data collection, management and analysis). Doctoral students on centre-driven PhD programmes (e.g. SPHeRE & ICAT) undertake defined, topic specific core modules in Year 1 in parallel with a rigorous thesis definition and fine-tuning exercise during their first year. In some Programmatic PhDs (e.g., SPHeRE), a full suite of programmes is provided to replace the generic set of core modules. The SPGS also provides an in-person induction day that provides research students with information about available supports and resources, including 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 or equivalent 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/clinicians selected by the SPGS.
- Each project has a Supervisory Team made up of at least two supervisors (one of which must have previous supervisory experience to successful completion) who manage the student and the project. Students must meet a member of their supervisory team at least once a month. Some programmes (e.g., MD) require specific 'milestone' meetings, which are sessions where all the students at the same stage on a programme present their work to each other and to their supervisors. The students are assessed through public questioning by a panel of experts across a range of specialties and they are given formal feedback. Supervisory teams are often interdisciplinary; for example, in the Intercalated MSc in Translational Research, the team is made up of a clinical and a scientific supervisor.

- Each student undergoes an annual review of their progress, carried out by two academics who are independent of the core supervisory team. The process takes the form of a mini viva. In advance of the mini viva, the student writes a substantial report on progress in their research project and includes highlights of their professional development as a researcher. During the viva, the student presents a brief summary of their work followed by questions from the review panel on various aspects of their project and future plans. Following the mini viva, the reviewers submit a brief report on the project and the progress of the student. Reviewers are asked to come to a unanimous decision regarding the progression of the student to the next academic session, with three available outcomes: 'Progress', 'Do not progress – repeat review in six months' or 'Do not progress – exit'. Both students and supervisors have access to the report. An appeal process is available to students who receive an unfavourable decision from the reviewers. The annual review process was evaluated following student survey feedback and follow-up focus groups in 2021, resulting in changes to the annual report to reflect a greater focus on goals-driven professional development and training.
- In the event of conflict between a research student and their supervisor, students are encouraged to contact the SPGS for help or support, and a formal process can be undertaken as detailed in the internal Conflict Resolution Policy.
- At least six months in advance of submitting their thesis, all students are required to submit a Thesis Completion Plan, outlining their goals and timelines for completing their projects. For StAR MD candidates, the Thesis Completion Plan is presented and defended in an open forum after 18 months of research.
- All students are encouraged to present their work in institution-wide fora to build their academic presentation skills; for example, the annual RCSI Research Day and the annual 'Thesis-in-3 event' where students 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, monthly. Students are also encouraged to present at national and international conferences, networking events and workshops within their chosen field of research. Funding for these may be 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 several 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 year-long programme to those with a record of publications in biomedical, clinical, surgical and health services research. This route allows scholars who have sufficient research experience at doctoral level, as demonstrated through previously published material, to gain academic recognition for their work over a minimum registration period of one year. Researchers who have published their own original research, which examiners deem has made a significant contribution to knowledge, can obtain a PhD or MD award in recognition of this work when it is presented in the form of a coherent thesis and successfully assessed in a viva voce examination. To be eligible to submit for a PhD-by-Prior-Publication, the candidate must have published a minimum of five original research papers in journals ranked Q1 in their relevant fields in the ten years prior to the date of application for admission and be senior author (first or last author) on all five research papers. To be eligible to submit for an MD-by-Prior-Publication, the candidate must have published a minimum of three original research papers in journals ranked Q1 or Q2 in their relevant fields in the ten years prior to the date of application for admission and be senior author (first or last author) on all three date-based papers.

The SPGS emphasises the broader need for personal and professional development of postgraduate students. All research students have access to the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF), as part of the core module Postgraduate Essentials (PC01), which helps to identify their strengths and prioritise their own areas for development. Vitae RDF provides students with tools to identify and leverage opportunities for their own personal and professional development and helps them to consider their career prospects and identify opportunities for career progression. The SPGS offers Internship and ERASMUS+ exchange programmes to enable students to avail of opportunities to travel to institutions overseas for work experience. Research students can contribute to RCSI undergraduate teaching programmes as laboratory demonstrators & tutors. A short on-line course 'Essential Skills for Laboratory Demonstrators' is offered to those who wish to participate in these activities. Research students can volunteer to work in the local community through REACH RCSI, the University's community engagement and access programme, which works with second-level students from disadvantaged backgrounds to provide tutoring in science subjects. Research students can also participate in the Student Engagement and Partnership Programme (StEP), the Student Leadership Development Programme and can compete for a Research Secondment Award to work abroad during their studies. 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, an online training course and guidelines on how to mentor students. In 2024, the Epigeum on-line course, 'Supervising Doctoral Studies' was made available to all supervisors. Mandatory completion of this course is being phased in. RCSI also participates in the Research Supervisor Support & Development Programme (RSSDP), which is a series of workshops targeted at new, inexperienced research supervisors, and at more experienced staff who would like to refresh their knowledge on aspects of research supervisory practice. In 2020, the successful RSSDP collaboration between UCD, TCD and RCSI was extended to include the Karolinska Institute (Stockholm) and UNSW (Sydney, Australia) and in 2021 to include IUA Universities. Institutions offers specific workshops or online supports that are open to partner institutions. These collaborative workshops address key, generic research supervisor challenges. In relation to ethical oversight of research within the University, research ethics committees act to ensure the highest standards of conduct in research at RCSI. This is achieved [a] by evaluating ethical considerations of all research projects involving human or animal participants, and

conducted by or through members of staff, which are not evaluated by other similar committees; and [b] by fulfilling an educational and advisory role regarding ethical aspects of research to promote best practice in research conducted throughout RCSI.

The SPGS avails of student satisfaction & engagement survey data generated by the QEO through regular internal surveys and external surveys such as StudentSurvey.ie. 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 RCSI Awards and Qualifications Committee (A&QC) has responsibility, 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 the 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. RCSI is a member of the European Universities Association (EUA), and staff participate in conferences and events run by EUA Council of Doctoral Education. The SPGS is a member of the UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE), and staff members regularly attend UKCGE events and conferences.

RCSI is committed to carrying out research to the highest standards of professionalism and scientific rigour to ensure the accuracy and integrity of research outputs. The University's approach to research conduct and integrity aligns with the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and with Ireland's Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes. These principles are central to the RCSI approach to Research Governance. RCSI's institutional Academic Integrity Committee includes the manager of the SPGS as a member. Examiner appointments for research awards are reviewed and signed-off by several 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 training programme online, a self-directed course specifically developed for Irish researchers.

5.0 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support

Recruiting and developing RCSI's academic, research and professional staff is central to excellence in teaching, postgraduate training and research. RCSI seeks to recruit, retain and promote outstanding academic staff who enable students and postgraduate trainees to reach their full potential. Academic appointments and promotions are competitive and based on objective criteria (education, research and service contributions). The human resources (HR) 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 webpages 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 several years in advance. This pipeline/pool development process will be guided by an Academic Search Committee (ASC).
- **Recruitment approach:** The ASC will make decisions on advertising channels (newspapers, journals, websites etc.); sourcing channels (conferences etc.); use of an external search agency and whether support from the in-house International Talent Specialist is needed. The recruitment team will then meet with the most relevant internal stakeholders to identify details of the appropriate channels to advertise and market the posts.
- **Shortlisting:** The Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (DVCAA) leads the shortlisting process for Professors and Associate Professors but may delegate this responsibility to the nominated chair, or hiring lead, for Associate Professors or Academic Clinicians below Head of Department level and for other roles. Equally, if the DVCAA cannot sit on a panel, they will nominate a suitable replacement. All members of the interview panel must be invited to participate in the shortlisting process to [a] ensure that fair and transparent decisions are reached, and [b] establish a number of quality candidates. In the absence of all members of the interview panel being available to participate in the shortlisting process, then, at a minimum, the Head of School and Head of Discipline, must be involved in the shortlisting process. The most highly ranked candidates are called for interview and the number called for interview should ideally reflect an applicant to appointment ratio of 5:1 (e.g., average of five candidates per position), for reasons of fairness and equity. Gender balance and diversity of applicants called for interview should also form part of the consideration.
- **Interviews:** For Head of Department roles, RCSI generally requires a two-stage process, a pre-interview visit and a formal interview. There is a requirement for the interview panel to be gender balanced and have someone with appropriate external expertise. Some posts may have a minimum requirement for four panel members, 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 are collected by the HR Representative on the panel. All staff are required to complete mandatory Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training which includes a module specifically on unconscious bias. The Learning and Development team also offer a half-day training session for interview panel members.
- **Reference checks & Offers:** Two references are required from the agreed candidate before an offer is made. The referees must be people that the candidate reported into, be relevant to the role that is being recruited for and be as current as possible. A recruitment representative will contact the candidate to let them know that their references will be checked. Details of the new employee's qualifications are stored on the Core HR system. The parameters of the offer are agreed between the relevant Senior

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

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

RCSI prioritises staff development in line with its overall philosophy of life-long learning. The institution supports staff to participate in the Postgraduate Diploma in Health Professions Education offered by the Health Professions Education Centre. HPEC also offer a range of other educational inputs for staff.

In parallel, a wide range of developmental supports are offered through the Staff Learning and Development function within the HR team. These include:

- The annual Staff Development Scheme which offers subsidised places to staff on a range of Level 8 and 9 programmes run by the Graduate School of Healthcare Management and other schools. Staff can also apply for funding support to pursue doctoral studies in RCSI and academic qualifications in other HEIs.
- Short courses and workshops across a range of topics (approx. 60 in this period), online learning, bespoke team development sessions and 1:1 coaching and mentoring opportunities.
- The Positive Connections mentoring programme which supports early career academics and has continued to expand with 14 mentoring pairs during 2024.
- Managers from Professional Services participate in the Collaborate Inter University Mentoring programme with colleagues from other HEIs to develop their leadership skills.
- 14 colleagues were selected to participate in the Aurora Women's Leadership Development programme and worked with institutional mentors throughout the programme.
- A Career Development Programme is offered to support the annual intake of circa 100 clinical educators; this includes mentoring from senior clinicians, CV preparation, interview skills and careers talks.
- The Managing Through People programme provides comprehensive leadership development for front line people managers offering a wide range of learning modalities including expert led sessions, 360 assessment and coaching, emotional intelligence profiling, reflective practice and peer mentoring.

These development opportunities are advertised to all staff through the internal social media platform, WorkVivo, through the HR Hub and via internal mailing lists. On an annual basis, all staff are required to complete online training on General Data Protection Regulations, Cyber Security Awareness, Health and Safety Awareness and an Introduction to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, with a compliance rate of 100%, during the reporting period. HR also provides a campus-wide licence for the online training library of LinkedIn Learning providing access to thousands of high-quality video-based training courses. A licence for Nature Masterclasses gives researchers access to training on key skills covering the whole research lifecycle.

RCSI continues to monitor policies to support and guide staff. The theme of the 2024 policy review process was related to Family Friendly policies. The substantive policies remained fit for purpose, however, the following changes were applied:

- There was an increase of Parents Leave from 7 weeks to 9 weeks, in line with legislation.
- The approvals process from for any associate leave was amended from the Head of Department/School to the relevant Line Manager to align with a desire to provide greater decision making to local management.
- The consistent inclusion of RCSI's Employee Assistance Programme details across the suite of Family Friendly policies.

In January 2024, HR launched the HR Hub (Case Study 10), a one stop shop for staff to find all relevant HR policies and procedures as well as general guidance and information relation to staff benefits and other areas of interest.

During the reporting period, RCSI was recognised as one of the Sunday Times Best Places to Work. This was based on an anonymous externally run survey of staff and RCSI received a rating of excellent across all areas assessed. RCSI was also named as 'Best in the Education Sector' at the Menopause Workplace Excellence/Great Place to Work Awards in recognition of the work done to support menopause in the workplace such as a menopause policy, training, awareness campaigns, menopause cafes and a network of menopause champions.

Through the Vice Chancellors Awards RCSI recognises colleagues who go above and beyond in their roles, bringing RCSI's values of Respect, Collaboration, Scholarship and Innovation to life Approximately 200 staff nominated their fellow colleagues and teams across six award categories.

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 needed to be competitive at academic promotion rounds. Most staff members are involved also in the annual Professional Development Planning (PDP) process (which compliments the Academic Promotions Process) through which they identify their goals and development needs for the coming year. Academic staff must outline their educational goals separately from their research and service goals. These goals are reviewed mid-year and then re-evaluated in conjunction with their line manager at the end of the year.

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

RCSI also provides opportunities for staff of institutions that provide higher education outside the State to teach, learn or conduct research in RCSI. Visiting academics contribute to intellectual activity in RCSI, expand opportunities for networking, build relationships internationally and stimulate further engagement such as joint research work, publications and reciprocal visits. Options for such staff include Educator in Residence, Erasmus+, Fulbright Scholar, Adjunct and Visiting Academic Staff Scheme, Visiting Scientist Scheme and appointments as External Examiners on postgraduate programmes.

RCSI provides a wide range of general development, pastoral care and welfare services to staff including health & wellbeing resources, supports for parents & carers and pension & retirement benefits. All staff and students can avail of services including counselling and support from an external provider Spectrum Health. The RCSI INSPIRE programme aims to promote health and wellbeing.

6.0 Information and Data Management

Data about programmes and other activities is collected and analysed through a variety of processes to support quality assurance. Information sources include institutional metrics, student population profiles, student feedback, student progression rates, HEA return data, alumni career paths and information related to student support.

Institutional Metrics:
An essential information stream that contributes to quality assurance processes, business planning and to the monitoring of implementation of institutional strategy. Data that feeds into strategy implementation and impact monitoring is gathered annually by the Vice Chancellors Office, including in the following areas: health and societal wellbeing, education and student success, research and innovation and foundations for sustainable impact. These are monitored routinely by the Senior Management Team and shared with senior leaders and governing committees across RCSI. The Insights & Planning Office (IPO), established in 2020, helps to develop RCSIs business intelligence and management information and reporting capability. The IPO provides frequent bibliometric analysis including benchmarking and analysis and insights on the international higher education landscape.

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

Student Feedback:
As set out in section 2.4, the QEO manages the collection, analysis and dissemination of student feedback in RCSI. Undergraduate and taught postgraduate students in Dublin and Bahrain are given an opportunity to give feedback about modules completed in each semester while research scholars complete a scholar experience survey. All student surveys contain a series of core items relating to modules, assessments, skills and staff. Surveys are developed in collaboration with Year/Programme Directors and other faculty staff who have an opportunity to suggest additional survey items if required. The Students' Union participates in survey promotion. The QEO conducts an in-depth analysis of both quantitative and qualitative feedback to inform and enhance the delivery of RCSI programmes. Detailed reports that contain both quantitative and qualitative survey responses are circulated to Programme & Year Directors who can share the findings with their teaching staff. This gives module coordinators and facilitators an opportunity to identify areas for improvement. 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. A separate loop-closing system is implemented in RCSI Bahrain. In 2020-21, RCSI introduced the "Student Pulse Poll", to capture feedback on a more frequent basis in response to the rapid changes in student experience due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This consisted of a short, 4-question survey conducted monthly to track changes in student experience. The frequency has been gradually decreased to one Student Pulse survey at the beginning of the academic year, complemented by a longer end of Semester survey.

Student progression rates:
Progression rates and graduate numbers for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes are reported by the RCSI Registry.

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.

HEA returns:
RCSI is required to collect data for the HEA Annual Statistical Return. This process is managed by Registry.

Career paths of graduates:
Upon graduation, students become part of RCSI's alumni community of over 32,000 in 103 countries. The relationships with alumni are managed by a dedicated Alumni Team who collect and manage information about graduates in the Alumni Database. The database includes information such as employment data e.g., workplace, area of practice and data related to interest and participation in volunteering at RCSI. A new mechanism for updating the database was introduced in 2024 with the launch of a dedicated Alumni Portal through which RCSI graduates can remain informed about news, stories and events as well as also updating their own contact details. This gives graduates greater control of their data. On an annual basis the team conducts a 'census' to verify the number of alumni, location of contactable alumni and employment data. In addition, the team participates in the annual Alumni Engagement Metrics survey, which is conducted by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education. This survey records alumni engagement across events, communications, volunteering, and philanthropy. It allows the team to benchmark engagement levels against a total of 375 institutions in 20 countries.

Data Protection: RCSI operates in compliance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. RCSI's Privacy Policy is published on the website and the following Data Protection Policies are available on the staff portal:
• Data Privacy Statement
• Data Subject Rights Policy
• Data Breach Policy
• Data Processors Policy
• Data Sharing Checklist
• RCSI Data Retention Policy
• Clean Desk Policy
• Privacy By Design Policy
Annual Data Protection Training is a mandatory requirement among RCSI Staff.

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

7.0 Public Information and Communication

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

Learner information:
The RCSI website is the primary source of information for prospective students on all programmes and awards. On the "Study with us" pages on the RCSI website, learners can find details of programmes available at undergraduate and postgraduate level and on higher degrees by research. Information is tailored for either undergraduate or postgraduate learners and includes various entry routes, programme award, NFQ level, programme structure, entry requirements, fees, programme content, student testimonials and application processes. Learners can also find information on access, scholarships, open days, and much more.

RCSI always aims to create high-quality marketing material to give prospective students a realistic and immersive sense of the academic and non-academic experience they can expect at the University. The University also has an extensive communications programme in place to keep prospective learners up to date on news and developments regarding the academic and social experiences of current students. Other sources of information for prospective learners include CRM emails, school guidance counsellors, RCSI prospectuses, social media activities (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn and TikTok), external education and careers portals, and overseas agents' websites. This year the content strategy for RCSI's Student Life brand was reassessed with a view to better supporting prospective students in their decision-making (See Case Study 1).

Public Information:
RCSI's institutional communications strategy is aimed at building the university's reputation for education and research excellence and deepening understanding of its mission, strengths and achievements among key stakeholders. The university actively communicates through its website and across each of the main social media channels. Social engagement is a key pillar in the communications strategy and is particularly relevant in RCSI's efforts to build greater global awareness of its education and research strengths. RCSI participates in several annual community engagement initiatives such as National Heritage Week, Culture Night, and Open House. RCSI MyHealth is the university's flagship public engagement initiative. Through it, RCSI academics, researchers and clinicians leverage their expertise to help the public to improve their health and well-being.

8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review

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

Internal Quality Assurance Reviews:
The Quality Enhancement Office operates a system of rolling Internal Quality Reviews under policies and procedures which are aligned with guidance from Quality & Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. These reviews run in four parallel cycles:
- Reviews of Schools within the University of Medicine & Health Sciences.
- Reviews of Postgraduate/Professional Faculties.
- Reviews of Professional Support Units.
- Reviews of overseas Campuses.

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 (QIP)by the unit. Peer review group reports and their corresponding QIPs are published by RCSI.

Programmatic Reviews:
All matters related to Programmatic Reviews in RCSI are managed by the Awards and Qualification Committee (A&QC). The A&QC oversees a rolling cycle of Programmatic Reviews of all RCSI programmes which offer qualifications or awards on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), and which fall under the governance of the Medicine and Health Science Board. Programmatic Reviews follow a process including the following steps: preparation of a self-evaluation report, 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. Programmatic Review panels are empowered to recommend a period of with quality improvement planning with follow-up or, in extremis, to recommend discontinuation of a degree programme.

Programme Monitoring:
RCSI overseas campuses submit programme monitoring forms to the Quality Enhancement Office in respect of the educational programmes that they deliver. As part of the Quality Enhancement Repository, schools now regularly record improvements made in response to feedback, including from external examiners, faculty, assessment outcomes and accreditation processes. This information, accumulated over several years can be used as evidence in programmatic reviews.

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

Use of metrics:
In order to support the self-evaluation and monitoring processes RCSI routinely collects and generates statistical data for monitoring and self-evaluation. RCSI also collects and analyses institutional metrics aligned with our strategic objectives.
RCSI Risk Register:

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

9.0 Details of Arrangements with Third Parties

9.1 Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

Type of arrangement	Total Number
PRSBs	6
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 recognised college of the NUI. Accordingly, degree awards of RCSI are awards of the NUI. Please note the "date of accreditation" does not apply in this context - for further information see http://www.nui.ie/about/pdf/gvrnce_docs/QA_Relationship_NUI_RCSI.pdf
Date of accreditation or last review	01/01/1900
Date of next review	

2. Type of arrangement	**PRSB**
Name of body:	Medical Council of Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelors Degrees in Medicine, Surgery & Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO] RCSI Dublin; RCSI Bahrain; Perdana University-RCSI School of Medicine; RUMC https://www.medicalcouncil.ie/education/career-stage-undergraduate/quality-assurance/medical-school-accreditation/accreditation-reports/ 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 on 24-25 Oct. 2022 (Bahrain); 27-28 Feb. 2023 (Perdana) 22-23 Feb. 2023 (RUMC) Dates of next review: 11 – 13 November 2024 (Dublin); 2026 (Bahrain); Not applicable. The final PURCSI class will graduate in 2024 (Perdana); 2028 (RUMC)

Date of accreditation or last review	28/02/2023
Date of next review	11/11/2024

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

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

5. Type of arrangement	PRSB
Name of body:	Nursing & Midwifery Board of Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	A portfolio of Postgraduate Certificate, Postgraduate Diploma, BSc & MSc programmes as listed in the Irish Register of Qualifications [irq.ie] Rolling five-year accreditation cycles - as such the date of accreditation is not provided in this context.
Date of accreditation or last review	14/03/2024
Date of next review	15/03/2029

6. Type of arrangement	PRSB
Name of body:	Malaysian Medical Council
Programme titles and links to publications	PURCSI & RUMC Bachelors Degrees in Medicine, Surgery & Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO] Date of accreditation or last review: • PURCSI: 8 & 9 Jun. 2022. • RUMC: 15 – 19 Jan 2024 Date of next review: PURCSI: Not applicable. The final class graduated in 2024. RUMC: • April 2025 – Interim monitoring review • April 2027 – Full Review
Date of accreditation or last review	19/01/2024
Date of next review	

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

8. Type of arrangement	QA body
Name of body:	Education & Training Quality Authority, Kingdom of Bahrain
Programme titles and links to publications	Internal QA policies & procedures; all programmes of higher education and professional training; institutional listing and placement and alignment of programmes to the Bahrain Qualifications Framework (NQF) 2018: Institutional Accreditation 4-7 Apr. 2021: Programmatic Review (virtual review) of Bachelor of Science in Nursing and Master of Science in Nursing. Date of accreditation and placement and revalidation on the NQF: Mar. 2022. 6-10 Mar. 2022: Programmatic Review of Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery, Bachelor in the Art of Obstetrics (MB BCh BAO). Date of accreditation: Jul. 2022.
Date of accreditation or last review	25/07/2022
Date of next review	06/10/2024

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; licensing of all programmes of higher education and professional training. Institutional Accreditation Visit 8-11th April 2018. Certificate granted 24th Feb 2019. Date of next review: 2024. Now in collaboration with the BQA.
Date of accreditation or last review	11/04/2018
Date of next review	06/10/2024

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	• PURCSI Bachelors Degrees in Medicine, Surgery & Obstetrics • RUMC; Bachelors Degrees in Medicine, Surgery & Obstetrics Date of accreditation or last review: • PURCSI: 8 & 9 Jun. 2022. • RUMC: Oct. 2018 Date of next review: • PURCSI: Not applicable. The final class will graduate in 2024. • RUMC: 15 – 19 Jan. 2024
Date of accreditation or last review	19/01/2024
Date of next review	

11. Type of arrangement	**PRSB**
Name of body:	Dental Council of Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor's Degree in Dental Surgery Accreditation endorsement received April 2024 with further status reports and inspections planned.
Date of accreditation or last review	30/04/2024
Date of next review	

9.2 Collaborative Provision

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

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

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

Type of arrangement	Total Number
Joint research degrees	1
Joint/double/multiple awards	1
Collaborative programmes	3
Franchise programmes	1
Linked providers (DABs only)	0

1. Collaborative provision	Franchise programme
Name of body (/bodies):	Perdana University - RCSI School of Medicine (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelors Degrees in Medicine, Surgery & Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO] The teach-out of this programme concluded during the reporting period.
Date of last review	19/10/2015
Date of next review	

2. Collaborative provision	Collaborative programme
Name of body (/bodies):	RCSI-UCD Malaysia Campus (Penang, Malaysia)
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelors Degrees in Medicine, Surgery & Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO] Date of next review 2023
Date of last review	07/12/2023
Date of next review	

3. Collaborative provision	Collaborative programme
Name of body (/bodies):	Munster Technological University

Programme titles and links to publications	Certificate in Biomedical Sciences & Certificate in Biopharmaceutical Sciences. Programme reaccredited by RCSI in May 2023 and NUI for Sept 2023
Date of last review	25/05/2023
Date of next review	

4. Collaborative provision	**Joint/double/multiple award**
Name of body (/bodies):	Soochow University (Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, China)
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelors Degree in Clinical Pharmacy (International) - RCSI/NUI - not currently running (date of agreement 2018) BSc Pharmacy – Soochow University [Dual Award] BSc in Advanced Therapeutic Technologies – Soochow University [Dual Award] MSc Research [Dual Award]
Date of last review	29/05/2024
Date of next review	

5. Collaborative provision	**Collaborative programme**
Name of body (/bodies):	King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia; Soochow University, China; University of Jordan, Jordan.
Programme titles and links to publications	PhD StAR (all awarded RCSI PhD only). Currently undergoing review.
Date of last review	27/09/2024
Date of next review	

6. Collaborative provision	**Joint research degree**
Name of body (/bodies):	Qatar University
Programme titles and links to publications	PhD StAR (Dual award). Currently undergoing review.
Date of last review	27/09/2024
Date of next review	

9.3 Articulation Agreements

Definition:

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

Articulation agreements - Total number	1

1. Articulation agreement	Articulation agreement
Name of body (/bodies):	Soochow University (Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, China)
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelors Degree in Clinical Pharmacy (International) - RCSI/NUI;
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	29/08/2018
Date of next review	
Detail of the agreement	The Transnational Collaboration Agreement between the partner universities was signed on 29 August 2018. The articulation agreement provides for students entering the Soochow University (SU) Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy degree programme and, having met the stated requirements by the end of the second year of the programme, transferring to RCSI to complete Years 3 & 4 of their programme. 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). This programme is not currently running.

RCSI, University of Medicine and Health Sciences

2025

Annual Quality Report RCSI,
University of Medicine and Health Sciences
PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE
ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT
Reporting Period 2023-2024

PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT
Guidelines on Completing Part B

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

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

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

Part B provides evidence of quality improvement and enhancement and impact[2] of QA activities within the totality of the institution's QA system.

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

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

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

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

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

Case Studies

QQI recommends that written case studies should:
- Be between half a page and two pages in length;
- Relate to a specific time- and subject-bound issue;
- Include an introduction that sets out a brief overview of contextual matters;
- Include any relevant supporting data and data analysis;
- Include links to any sources cited;

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

- Include a clear and concise concluding paragraph with an overview of the key outcomes/learning.

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

1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments

1.1 Strategic QA Updates

Strategic Updates

A new strategic plan, <u>Innovating for a Healthier Future, 2023-2027</u>, was launched in September 2023. It encompasses four core themes: Health and Societal Wellbeing, Education and Student success, Research and Innovation and Foundations for Sustainable Impact. These themes are built upon four foundations: quality, reputation, sustainability and equality, diversity & inclusion. As such, RCSI'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.

The strategic plan consists of 20 actions. These actions have 420 sub-actions or milestones. While Senior Management Team (SMT) members keep ownership and responsibility for each action, 111 senior leaders (including SMT members) manage the execution of specific milestones. Strategy implementation is on track with 31% of milestones complete.

New School of Dentistry

A notable development has been the foundation of a new School of Dentistry, with the planned launch of a Bachelor of Dental Surgery in September 2025. This programme has been approved by the Dental Council of Ireland. Supported by a curriculum partner, the University of Plymouth/Peninsula Dental School, RCSI is adapting their partner's curriculum, refining learning outcomes and aligning them with required (ADEE) standards, ensuring that the curriculum is aligned with Dental Council of Ireland's accreditation standards, and preparing for operational delivery. This new school is fully integrated into RCSI Governance systems. Programme rollout is overseen by a Programme Steering Group. A Curriculum Committee is active to support curriculum development and rollout. Several other groups are in place to support key aspects of the programme including Simulation & Practice Development, Estates Development, Staff Management, Technology, Student Recruitment, Communications & Marketing, and Finance & Funding. The first meeting of the External Advisory Group will be held early in the next reporting period.

Joint Education Institute

RCSI established a Joint Education Institute with Soochow University in China. The International College in Pharmaceutical Innovation (ICPI) is a collaboration between the School of Pharmacy and Biomolecular Sciences, RCSI and the College of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Soochow University. During 2023-2024 preparations were made to welcome the first cohort of students to the Future Campus in Wujiang China. There will be three programmes delivered: BSc in Pharmacy, BSc in Advanced Therapeutic Technologies and MSc Research. The curricula are being delivered wholly in China and 50:50 by both RCSI and Soochow University.

Quality Enhancement Office Updates

The Quality Enhancement Office (QEO) supports quality assurance and enhancement throughout RCSI. Its activity is directed by the Annual Work Plan. A new Work Plan was approved at the Quality Committee meeting in February 2024 and continues to be implemented. The <u>Quality Assurance Framework</u> is updated regularly and a further edition of the framework will be brought to Quality Committee in September 2024. The <u>Internal Quality Reviews calendar</u> and Terms of Reference for the Quality Committee are regularly reviewed and approved by the Quality Committee.

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	Respond to the CINNTE visit report	Complete. A review of the draft report was undertaken for factual accuracy, following which RCSI and QQI collaborated on its publication. The final report incorporated RCSI's institutional response.
2	Follow-up to CINNTE process	Complete. An institutional action plan was cocreated and approved. This was submitted to QQI and published. Actions were incorporated into RCSI's Strategy Tracker.
3	Application for International Education Mark	In progress. The QEO has progressed application in line with QQI's revised timelines.

1.3 Governance and Management

1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Body	Meeting dates
Quality Committee	10/09/2023; 13/12/2023; 21/02/2024; 24/04/2024
Awards & Qualifications Committee	08/09/2023; 16/10/2023; 27/11/2023; 18/12/2023; 15/01/2024; 26/02/2024; 25/03/2024; 15/04/2024; 20/05/2024; 17/06/2024
Academic Council	13/09/2023; 05/10/2023; 08/11/2023; 13/12/2023; 17/01/2024; 14/02/2024; 07/03/2024; 18/04/2024; 08/05/2024
Medicine & Health Sciences Board	28/09/2023; 23/11/2023; 29/02/2024; 29/05/2024
Surgery & Postgraduate Faculties Board	05/10/2023; 18/01/2024; 21/03/2024; 27/06/2024

1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

During the reporting period, the Medicine and Health Sciences Board made several key senior appointments:

- Professor Tracy Robson, Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic Affairs
- Professor Karen Morgan, President, RCSI and UCD Malaysia Campus
- Professor Helena Kelly, Head of School of Pharmacy & Biomolecular Sciences
- Professor Albert Leung Head of School of Dentistry
- Professor Nuala Healy, Chair of Department of Radiology

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
Joint Internal Quality Review of RUMC (RCSI & UCD Malaysia Campus)	Rolling internal quality assurance review. December 2023	https://www.rcsi.com/quality-enhancement-office/internal-quality-reviews

1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels[3] 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		1			4		
of those:							
On-site processes		1					
Desk reviews					4		
Virtual processes							
Average panel size for each process type*		6			3.5		

* excluding secretary if not a full panel member

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

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

Type of Expert/ Role on Panel	Total	Gender			Internal	National	International			Institution Type	
		Male	Female	Other, or unspecified			UK, incl. NI	Other European	Outside of Europe	Similar	Different
Chair*	1	1						1		1	
Secretary											
Academic/Discipline Specific	16	10	6		7	1	4	1	3	16	
Student Representative	1		1						1	1	
QA											
Teaching & Learning	2	1	1		2					2	
External Industry /Third Mission											

*Chair has background in QA

2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

Governance and Management of Quality

CINNTE Institutional Review

RCSI underwent an institutional review as part of the QQI CINNTE cycle of reviews, during the reporting period. As part of the review report, the review team recognised RCSI's commitment to high-quality education, and commended its work to foster inclusivity and diversity, its student engagement, and its supports. RCSI received 16 commendations and 17 recommendations. An implementation plan was codeveloped by colleagues across the institution, approved by the Medicine and Health Sciences Board on May 29th and by RCSI Council on June 20th, and published. It has since been incorporated into RCSI's Strategy Tracker with action owners and Senior Management Team leads assigned to each action. Through this tracker, regular updates on the progress of actions are provided to the QEO.

Quality Forum

A second Quality Forum event was held as part of the RCSI 2024 International Education Forum and staff from nearly all Schools, Faculties and Professional Support Units attended. The programme included workshops to co-create supports for in-class student surveys and an improved process to close the Internal Quality Review feedback loop. An exhibition of quality enhancement case studies was held to highlight exemplars of quality enhancement practice across a range of academic and professional departments.

Automated Strategic Planning System at RCSI Bahrain

RCSI Bahrain made significant strides in enhancing its strategic planning and performance management capabilities through the implementation of a new automated strategic planning system. This system serves as the central hub for the university's strategic and operational plans, key performance indicators, and progress tracking towards achieving institutional goals and objectives. At the core of the new system is a comprehensive strategic planning module that houses the university's overarching strategic plan, as well as the detailed operational plans for each of the academic and administrative units. These operational plans are directly linked to the high-level strategic pillars, with clearly defined key performance indicators, targets, and timelines. Through this new automated system, streamlining and centralising the university's strategic planning, monitoring and reporting functions was made possible, bringing a new level of alignment and accountability across the institution.

BQA Institutional Review

In preparation for the 2024 October institutional review by Bahrain's Education & Training Quality Authority (BQA), RCSI Bahrain submitted a comprehensive Self Evaluation Report (SER) - a crucial step in the review cycle. The SER provided a thorough self-assessment of RCSI Bahrain's quality assurance mechanisms across all areas of its operations, from governance and management to learning and teaching, community engagement and research. This exercise was an invaluable opportunity for the university to critically examine its own practices, identify areas for improvement and demonstrate its commitment to continuous enhancement. The SER drew on a wide range of quantitative and qualitative data, as well as feedback from a diverse range of stakeholders. The successful completion of this institutional review will not only ensure RCSI Bahrain's continued accreditation but will also solidify its position as a beacon of quality and innovation in the regional and international medical higher education landscape.

Programmes of Education and Training

Approved Programmes

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

- Professional Certificate in Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Healthcare and Science (Special Purpose Award; NFQ Level 9; 15 ECTS).

- MSc in Population Health Leadership (Major Award; NFQ Level 9; 90 ECTS) with two exit awards: Postgraduate Diploma in Population Health Leadership (60 ECTS) and Postgraduate Certificate in Population Health Leadership (30 ECTS).
- Professional Diploma in Leading Workplace Health and Wellbeing (Special Purpose Award: NFQ Level 9; 30 ECTS).

School of Medicine

The School of Medicine completed two years of the new medical curriculum rollout (Year 1 and 2). It is evaluating the impact of these changes and making appropriate, data driven adjustments as necessary, while also preparing for the implementation of the remaining years (Years 3 – 5). Although it has taken time for students to become familiarised with the new programmatic assessment approach, feedback has proven generally positive. In particular, Case Based Learning has significantly supported student learning, exposing them to clinical cases and patients from week one. Students now receive personalised feedback for every assessment activity through the implementation of a suite of technology solutions, with the core aim of supporting the student journey. A particular example of this feedback, is a personalised feedback report following the completion of a written exam, automated by assessment software and issued directly to each student's mailbox. While this report does not provide the question detail of the assessment, it outlines if the question was answered correctly, the learning outcomes being assessed, as well as the specialty and question specific keywords. Supporting students to self-correct and remediate in the appropriate areas.

The School is also reinforcing supports around the legacy curriculum to ensure students are supported across all live curricula. In the 2023-24 Academic year, the year 5 medicine programme piloted a new element to clinical placement "the Intern Attachment". This pilot afforded students the opportunity to be attached to an intern for two weeks within Beaumont Hospital. Feedback was very positive, and students noted this provided them with a hands-on approach to intern life, supporting their preparedness for practice after graduation. This academic year, the initiative will be expanded to both Beaumont and Connolly Hospitals.

School of Pharmacy and Biomolecular Sciences.

The School of Pharmacy and Biomolecular Sciences continued to roll out its new BSc in Advanced Therapeutic Technologies, which was funded by the Higher Education Authority, Human Capital Initiative Pillar 3. Significant engagement with partners enabled the provision of placements for students within the pharmaceutical industry. At the request of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research and Innovation (DFHERIS), the baseline EU/CAO student intake numbers on the Masters in Pharmacy Programme was increased from 40 in 2022 to 85. A new science teaching lab was completed for the School, with a capacity of 142 students to enable continued growth of all undergraduate programmes. The curriculum revision of the MPharm programme continues to be rolled out with Year 2 of the revised programme implemented in 2023/24.

School of Physiotherapy

Programme enhancements at the School of Physiotherapy included the completion of a new school curriculum and assessment review which will be implemented in the school in September 2025. Taking a helicopter view of the programme, using tools such as horizontal and vertical integration of key competencies, enabled the school to explicitly scaffold the students' learning as they progress through the programme. The School also expanded its postgraduate teaching programme and will be launching a new MSc in Musculoskeletal in September 2025 as well as several new microcredential courses in Paediatric Neurodisability, Stroke Rehabilitation, Research Methods for Healthcare Professionals, Translating Evidence to Practice, Ageing, Neuroscience and Neurorehabilitation. Within research, the new Cerebral Palsy Lifespan Health and Well-being (VP-Life) Research Centre was established, as part of a programme of excellence launched by the Cerebral Palsy Foundation in Ireland, which aims to establish Ireland as an International leader in cerebral palsy care and research. A new role of Operations Coordinator was created in the School, to support operational management, and quality assurance of programmes.

School of Nursing & Midwifery

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI) has a statutory responsibility to approve Education Bodies and Associated Health Care Providers in respect of educational programmes leading to registration as a nurse or midwife. As part of their oversight mechanisms, they visited RCSI to review the School of Nursing & Midwifery as a provider and to assess whether the programmes, the School delivers, meet the standards and requirements set for postgraduate nursing programmes, and programmes leading to registration as a nurse/midwife prescriber or advanced nurse practitioner. The inspection team consisted of NMBI staff and academics from Schools of Nursing at other Irish HEIs and the visit took place in March 2024 over 4 days. Following the visit, the NMBI deemed all School programmes to be accredited for 5 years. The School was commended in a number of area including leadership, breath of programme delivery and commitment to publishing student work. Some minor recommendations were also made, all of which have now been addressed. Engagement and success in this rigorous accreditation process has served to bolster the commitment by the School to deliver quality, clinically relevant programmes for nurses and midwives.

School of Dentistry

Preparations for the new bachelor's degree in dental surgery have progressed. This has included:

- Staff Recruitment: RCSI employed a Head of School, several clinical/academic dentists, professional services staff and strategic partners.
- Accreditation: RCSI successfully achieved National University Ireland (NUI) accreditation and gained the support of the Dental Council of Ireland following a comprehensive engagement regarding accreditation.
- Infrastructure: RCSI commenced the refurbishment of the School of Dentistry Headquarters at Reservoir House (Sandyford). This facility will host:
  - ο A 12-seat Dental Education Centre (DEC) and local decontamination unit.
  - ο A 55-seat Simulation unit and dental lab.
  - ο Student facilities to support teaching, learning and collaboration.
  - ο Staff facilities to support School and DEC operations.

School of Population Health

The School of Population Health launched a new MSc in Population Health Leadership, with the first cohort of students commencing in September 2024. The programme aims to equip leaders across a range of disciplines and career paths with the knowledge, skills and vision to deliver on population health goals in these challenging times. Graduates can expect to make a significant contribution driving positive change on the issues, dynamics and systems affecting the health of populations. The MSc is part of a suite of awards, which includes a Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate. The development and delivery of these new awards has been supported by the Cameron Scholars programme, an RCSI initiative to catalyse and sustain growth and to consolidate the University's position in the future of population health sciences.

School of Postgraduate Studies (SPGS)

A Black Jacket Ceremony was inaugurated in November 2023, with new scholars welcomed to RCSI and presented with a black RCSI SPGS jacket, signifying the beginning of their postgraduate studies at RCSI. The ceremony also hosted the inaugural SPGS awards for Research Communication (Scientific), Research Communication (Public) and Research Output Impact.

Graduate School of Healthcare Management (GSM)

GSM have continued to optimise online delivery, including the use of the state-of-the art X20 facility to create a vibrant and engaging learner experience. Complimentary to this, to create a sense of community amongst remote learners, GSM hosted several in-person learning and networking events involving international guest speakers, current and past students, as well as RCSI colleagues from across the university. In research activities, GSM faculty led the establishment of EQUIPS, an evidence-based research network focusing on quality improvement and patient safety, collaborating across seven universities and receiving funding from the Health Research Board and the HSE.

Teaching and Learning

In June 2024, the 13th RCSI International Education Forum (IEF) on the theme 'Innovating for a Healthier Future' was again held in person, with colleagues from Bahrain and Malaysia joining those in Dublin. This event also included the annual RCSI Education Innovation Awards facilitated by HPEC. This year saw a record number of entries from across the university's campuses with academic staff submitting creative ideas such as dementia communication interventions, transnational interprofessional education initiatives, and design-thinking education modalities.

Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

RCSI INSPIRE

The RCSI INSPIRE staff wellbeing programme continued to run employee wellness activities throughout the reporting period, including mindfulness sessions, mental health awareness training, nutritional workshops and flu vaccines. The events were often held in collaboration with university-wide partners including the Sports & Social Club, RCSI Gym, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Unit and CoMPPAS. The programme is based on five health pillars: physical, nutritional, mental, occupational and financial health. RCSI INSPIRE also oversee the maintenance of RCSI's Ibec KeepWell Mark which demonstrates RCSI's commitment to employee health, wellbeing and safety and, in 2023, RCSI received accreditation for the 3rd time. RCSI Inspire are also a key stakeholder with RCSI Healthy Campus.

Enhancements in Equality Diversity and Inclusion.

RCSI's commitment to embedding a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion was reaffirmed in action 17 of the new strategic plan Innovating for a Healthier Future 2023-2027. During this reporting period, a new EDI Strategy for 2024-2027 was also launched. RCSI won the Company of the Year award at the 2024 National Diversity and Inclusion Awards and was a finalist for the Advancing Race/Ethnicity Equality Award. The Department of Anatomy and Regenerative Medicine renewed their Athena Swan Bronze Award in April 2024, becoming the first RCSI Department to do so. 50% of RCSI staff completed the EDI Staff Survey, the results of which were shared with staff, and which will inform EDI training, events and campaigns.

A key milestone during this period was the launch of RCSI's Bystander Intervention Training Programme. This online training empowers learners to safely speak out if they witness misconduct or discrimination. The training features specially created videos covering social and medical scenarios, as well as a Virtual Patient scenario which enables the learner to practice different bystander intervention methods.

During this reporting period, the three staff and student EDI fora and five EDI staff networks undertook a variety of projects to further positive culture change in RCSI, including the following highlights. The Race Equality Forum held notable events such as an interview with Professor Dorothy Roberts, and the first EDI in Healthcare Conference. The VisABILITY Forum welcomed Dr Mary Doherty to mark Autism Awareness Month with a presentation on Neurodiversity in Medicine and the Autistic SPACE Framework. The Ending sexual violence, Supporting survivors and Promoting consent (ESP) Forum ran campaigns with both students and staff for Sexual Health and Wellbeing Week. The Women's Network hosted a panel event entitled 'Inspiring Inclusion in Education and Healthcare' for International Women's Day, and the Age Friendly Network celebrated Positive Ageing Week. The Multicultural Network held their popular festive food event, and the Parents and Carers' Network had a workshop 'Building Baby from Head to Toe'. Pride celebrations in 2024 included the annual Sports and Social Club Pride BBQ, and the staff Pride Network and student Pride Society taking part in the Dublin Pride Parade for the first time.

Student engagement was a priority for the EDI Unit during this period (see Case Study 13), including collaborations with the Students Union, Postgraduate Student Union and student societies. A student voice presentation became a standing item on the EDI Committee agenda.

EDI initiatives in RCSI were highlighted with six presentations and a poster at the Equitas – EDI in Practice in Higher Education Conference in May 2024, and RCSI's race equality work was also shared at the national Athena Swan Awards Ceremony.

Over 600 students and staff attended events organised by the EDI unit in 2023/2024 and over 250 engaged with voluntary training. Training partners during this period included Ability Focus, the Irish Deaf Society, Briana Fitzsimons and TENI (Transgender Equality Network Ireland). All staff were required to complete mandatory Introduction to EDI training on Moodle, and optional Moodle courses on race equality, EDI in higher education, and bystander intervention, were available for self-directed learning throughout the year. Incoming undergraduate students attended an Introduction to EDI presentation and Active Consent training.

Supports and resources for learners
Library
Library Service enhancements during the reporting period included the:
- Introduction of the Anatomy model collection - 67 anatomy models available for students to borrow.
- Launch of the EDI and Allyship Collection - developed from recommendations from the RCSI EDI Unit and the Race Equality Forum, to support learning in the areas of EDI and healthcare in particular.
- Introduction of a new Medical Humanities module, delivered by the Library Heritage Collections team, in the history of medicine as part of Student Choice: 'Pathologies Through Time: Health Then and Now' (Case Study 8)
- Replacement of the self-service machines in the main library campus, providing a more intuitive user experience and improved accessibility.

Online and onsite engagement and activity continued to grow with 1.8 million database searches, 248,000 searches across the library discovery platform PrimoVE, 120,000 Library Guides sessions, 16,000 group room bookings, 2,553 attendees of information skills classes and another 10,000 views of library training videos, 543 research consultations and 902,000 downloads from the RCSI repository. Student events at the Expo Stage also increased by 15% over this period.

RCSI Heritage Collections developments included celebrating the 250th anniversary of the birth of pioneering Irish surgeon and anatomist, Abraham Colles, with a programme of in-person events and virtual activity including a virtual exhibition and the launch of the digitised Colles archive, work that was funded by the Heritage Council of Ireland.

Student Engagement
As outlined in the RCSI strategy 2023-2027 'Innovating for a Healthier Future', the RCSI StEP programme is at the core of providing a distinctive and transformational educational experience that sets students up for success at RCSI and as future graduates.

Five StEP Agreements have now been launched, reflecting RCSI's ongoing and unwavering commitment to students as cocreators of their learning experience. Each year, following wide consultation with students and staff, several overarching themes are identified to be prioritised for funding. There are two open calls for funding annually in which both students and staff are invited to apply. In 2023-2024, 23 level 1 and 15 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 student 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. A list of StEP-funded projects for 2023-2024, in which students and staff worked in partnership on key projects, is provided in the current StEP Agreement 2024-2025.

61 staff and 69 students received RCSI Student Partnership Champion Awards during the reporting period. These awards are presented to students and staff who have made outstanding contributions to the overall student experience by working in partnership and sharing their expertise and perspectives on key RCSI projects.

RCSI StEP programme outputs in 2023-2024 were also closely aligned to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and eight StEP-funded projects were closely aligned to RCSI Healthy Campus with a unique focus on fostering an environment that supports physical and mental health, inclusivity, and equality across RCSI.

RCSI is also a participating institution of the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP) and has representation on the NStEP National Advisory Board. Students and staff also avail of NStEP training programmes annually. During the reporting period, RCSI hosted the NStEP Networking event 'Student Engagement, Well-Being and Belonging', bringing together colleagues and students from participating institutions across Ireland.

The RCSI StEP programme has resulted in presentations at national and international conferences and publications, and independent StEP-related research funding. As representative examples, in 2023-24, the Deputy Dean for Student Engagement, co-facilitated a pre-Conference workshop and a symposium as part of the international Thai Medical Education Conference. Nationally, the Deputy Dean also reported the outputs from an Irish Network of Healthcare Educators (INHED)-funded study on 'Embedding a universal culture of student partnership across RCSI; a study to identify key enablers from a staff and student perspective', at the INHED Conference. The NStEP Networking Event in November 2023 included 3 presentations from RCSI staff and students.

This student partnership philosophy has extended to RCSI-Bahrain, who have adopted RCSI's StEP programme since November 2021.

In 2022, a collaborative student-staff partnership project was undertaken, facilitated through StEP, to develop a framework and strategy to further promote and foster a culture and vision of 'Student Success'. A key output was the establishment of the RCSI definition of Student Success. Guided by this definition, RCSI has since developed a mechanism to identify gaps and to prioritise areas in which to further promote 'Student Success' on an annual basis. A new section, promoting student success, has been incorporated into RCSI StEP Agreements. Student Success is now firmly embedded in the RCSI Strategy 2023-2027 as one of four key pillars. A newly launched annual RCSI Student Success Champion Award has also been established to recognise staff who go above and beyond to contribute to the success of students.

A bespoke six-week RCSI Student Leadership Development Programme takes place annually. It was developed, in partnership with students, and aims to equip students with an understanding of the core concepts of leadership to support them in their leadership roles. It is open to all students and student leaders from the SU, PGSU, Postdoctoral Society, Sports' Council, Society Presidents, Club Captains, Learning Community Leaders, Student Ambassadors and class representatives from all undergraduate Schools are invited to participate each year. A total of 311 student leaders have successfully completed this programme since its establishment with each one receiving RCSI Certificates of Achievement and digital badges.

Learning Communities

Learning communities form an integral component of the educational philosophy for shaping future healthcare professionals at RCSI. Each undergraduate medical student is assigned to a Learning Community, fostering a vital sense of connection with RCSI and offering a solid foundation for newcomers adapting to university life in Ireland. The objective is to cultivate an inclusive and welcoming environment, enabling students to build new friendships with peers and collaborate with both colleagues and academic staff. This engagement is achieved through participation in curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities throughout their academic journey, enhancing their overall experience in the program.

Information and Data Management

Central to the development of the new RCSI Strategic Plan 2023 - 2027 'Innovating for a Healthier Future' was the definition of 20 Actions (individual projects) under each of the four strategic themes:(i) Health and societal Wellbeing; (ii) Education and Student success; (iii) Research and Innovation; (iv) Foundations for Sustainable Impact. For each Action, key deliverables, owners and timelines are defined with associated metrics to monitor their implementation. These metrics are gathered, analysed and reported three times a year by the CEO's Office and reviewed by the Senior Management Team. Other key metrics are monitored and reported annually by the Insights & Planning Office, the Student, Academic and Regulatory Affairs Office, the Office of Research & Innovation, the Admissions Office, Faculties, Schools and overseas Campuses.

Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review

The collection, analysis and dissemination of student feedback in RCSI is managed by the QEO. The QEO ran and processed 341 surveys during the reporting period. Response rates varied, depending on the nature and audience of the project, with a rate of 21% on the core undergraduate end-of-semester student feedback surveys (Student Pulse, Semester 2), similar to the previous reporting period.

The RCSI student voice survey programme "Student Pulse" consists of three surveys. The first survey in the academic year focuses on first year student experience and gathers feedback on recruitment, on-boarding and induction experience, which leads to enhancements in communication to prospective students. Additional surveys are conducted at the end of each semester to gather feedback on an academic and non-academic student experience.

During this reporting period, the QEO continued a pilot of in-class survey collection to increase student engagement with feedback. Some year groups, in RCSI Dublin and Bahrain, had their end of semester Student Pulse surveys conducted as timetabled activities or during teaching session. Students were briefed by the QEO or academic staff and given an opportunity to complete a survey in class. The response rates to these surveys were significantly higher compared to surveys distributed via email, without any in-class activities. The QEO led a workshop as part of the Quality Forum to gather feedback from stakeholders about how this approach could be implemented in more year groups, being mindful of the resources required. Appropriate timing of survey sessions and support from academic staff were identified as key factors to secure good student engagement with in-class surveys.

The first institutional 'You said, we did' campaign was implemented during this reporting period, communicating actions undertaken in response to student feedback by schools and professional departments to the student body. Multiple communication channels, including student newsletters, social media (in collaboration with student representatives), Moodle, electronic screens and a 'Quality Event' for students, were used to communicate the impact of surveys. Additionally, selected examples of actions were included in the introductions to end of Semester Student Pulse surveys.

Student Pulse results were regularly presented to the Senior Management Team and reports were distributed to Schools and professional departments. The QEO successfully continued using a Quality Enhancement Repository to further support closing the feedback loop on surveys. Undergraduate programme leads and professional departments were requested to provide examples of actions implemented in response to student feedback. The QEO also collected evidence of good practice identified in student feedback, and examples of other quality enhancement actions in response to feedback from faculty, external examiners and other stakeholders. A thematic analysis of the content was undertaken and presented to staff at the RCSI International Education Forum and the content from the previous year was used in the 'You said, we did' campaign. As a pilot, the Repository was implemented in one postgraduate programme, with a view to expanding it next academic year.

The regular end of Semester data collection tools were continued as in previous years. These 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 to inform and enhance the delivery of RCSI programmes. Reports, documenting these analyses, are circulated to programme directors. Quantitative reports (without open ended comments) are routinely made available to students via Moodle. In Bahrain infographics summarising the institution's response to student feedback are developed and published.

As part of a project listed in the RCSI Strategic Plan, the QEO collaborated with a Senior Management stakeholder to develop a set of student-experience metrics for postgraduate programmes, to complement the current set of metrics reported for undergraduate programmes. A survey instrument for postgraduate programmes was updated to capture the relevant aspects of learning experience in those programmes and it will be recommended for implementation across all postgraduate programmes.

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 staff surveys, as required. During 2023-24, RCSI took part in an external 'Great Place to Work' survey, and so paused other internal staff surveys. Several bespoke staff and stakeholder surveys were conducted to gather evidence for internal quality reviews (Finance Department and School of Medicine) and to capture feedback from governance committees. As in previous years, the QEO also managed feedback processes for the National Surgical Training Programme, APPEL and the Irish Institute of Pharmacy.

Other Parties Involved in Education and Training

RCSI Hospitals Group

RCSI is the Academic Partner of the RCSI Hospitals Group, 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 (e.g. Mater Private, Bons Secours) 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 of 875,000. The Group provides a wide range of emergency, diagnostic, treatment and rehabilitation services supported by a workforce of 11,200 WTE staff.

Dublin City Council & Dublin Fire Brigade

In 2002, RCSI entered into a partnership agreement with Dublin City Council and Dublin Fire Brigade (DFB) for the development and provision of 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. This successful partnership, which has been in situ for 22 years, has a partnership board which meets regularly to provide oversight of the programme and to consider options for future development of the programme and the implementation of any clinical or legislative changes to the programme. By the end of 2024, over 700 people will have undertaken or are currently undertaking the paramedic programme, with another class beginning in Spring 2025. As a measure of quality, PHECC requires all training institutes to undergo audits. This process also ensures that standards are maintained, and the education provided meets requirements. Recently RCSI/DFB underwent this process and received extremely positive feedback.

Irish Hospice Foundation

RCSI has provided postgraduate education programmes in bereavement and loss in partnership with the Irish Hospice Foundation, since 2004. RCSI offers three programmes in collaboration with IHF, one Professional

Certificate and two Masters programmes. Programme Examination Boards are facilitated by RCSI and held twice per year.

Third-mission activities, societal and community engagement

UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

RCSI was proud to be ranked as the number one university in the world for 'UNSDG3 Good Health and Well-being' and Top 100 for 'UNSDG17 Partnerships for the Goals' in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2023.

A new Sustainability and Climate Health Committee was established to oversee and embed sustainability and create further awareness of the UNSDGs at the core of all RCSI activities, including sustainable healthcare, education for the goals, green campus and green labs. RCSI is committed to achieving net carbon zero by 2050, and an interim target of a 50% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030, a target well on the way to being met.

RCSI was recognised for its commitment to sustainability with the 2022 Best Green Campus Award at the annual Education Awards. The Education Awards recognise, encourage and celebrate excellence in the third level education sector on the island of Ireland. RCSI also won the Green Healthcare Award and the Sustainable Energy Achievement Award at the 2022 Green Awards. The Green Awards recognise the extraordinary contribution and commitment that companies make towards growing a greener future in Irish business. RCSI is the first Irish University to have embarked on an Energy Performance Contract, which has secured significant energy reductions across the campus. In 2023, RCSI commenced the ISO 50001 Energy Management process, with a target to achieve the international standard in 2024. Carbon literacy training for staff has also been rolled out and further sustainability and energy awareness programmes are currently being developed.

RCSI applied to join Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Ireland; this all-island network of universities and institutions focusses on high quality education and research for the SDGs. Established in 2022 by University College Cork and Queens University Belfast the network encompasses partners across the island of Ireland with the hope of encouraging collaborative approaches to sustainable research solutions and education.

RCSI was ranked as the top-performing medical school in Ireland in the Planetary Health Report Card 2023. Part of a global initiative led by the Planetary Health Alliance (PHA), an international consortium of organisations committed to addressing global environmental change and its health impacts, the report card assesses the extent to which higher education institutions across the globe are promoting and supporting planetary health.

RCSI Art Strategy

RCSI's Art Strategy's purpose is to deliver the Art Committee's vision that art can enrich the learning environment and enhance the culture and connectivity of its community of healthcare professionals. A dynamic and ambitious programme is underway, weaving together various threads aimed at cultivating a more profound connection between the RCSI community and the Art Collection. Central to this effort is the facilitation of access to the collection, ensuring it becomes a vibrant focal point accessible to all. Simultaneously, there's a strategic imperative to broaden the audience base, fostering a collective appreciation for the diverse array of artistic expressions housed within the institution. Furthermore, the Art Strategy seeks to propel RCSI beyond conventional boundaries by evolving the institution's own understanding of art. This evolution isn't merely a journey of appreciation but a deliberate exploration of the intersection between art and the healthcare profession - a fusion that promises to unlock new dimensions of insight and inspiration for stakeholders.

RCSI Engage and REACH RCSI Programme

The RCSI Engage vision is to enhance human health and education by building reciprocal partnerships between RCSI staff and students and local and national communities. The REACH (Recreation Education And Community Health) RCSI Programme is the local community engagement and pre-entry access programme connecting RCSI

with the local community, promoting health and facilitating access to further and higher education for groups traditionally underrepresented and promoting health. Community partnerships and involvement of RCSI students and staff through volunteering, community engaged learning and staff/student partnerships are central to the reciprocal nature of the programme. Highlights during the reporting period included:

New RCSI Engage Strategy 2023 – 2027
November 2023 saw the launch of the RCSI Engage strategy 2023 – 2027 following extensive consultation, building on achievements throughout the previous RCSI Engage Strategy and outlining how RCSI will extend and embed engagement activities across teaching, learning, research, and extracurricular activities. It will drive the development of a range of reciprocal programmes that will benefit the local community, patients and the wider public nationally, while enriching student and staff experiences and contributing to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs).

Primary and Post Primary School Engagement
In 2023-2024, REACH RCSI engagement with primary and post primary schools took place both on campus and in communities. It saw RCSI staff and student volunteers visit classrooms and community centres, engaging in health and educational activities co-designed to facilitate access and widen participation.

During Science Week 2023, the REACH RCSI "Cracking Crime with Science" initiative saw DEIS primary schools working with RCSI's access and community engagement team, academics, student volunteers and Community Gardaí. Tasked with solving the mystery of the stolen RCSI silver graduation mace through a range of science experiments (linked to the primary science curriculum framework), including blood typing, fingerprinting, chromatography, UV light experiments, microscopy and footprint analysis.

In 2022–2023, over 500 local primary school children from RCSI's linked DEIS schools participated in health education activities supported by RCSI staff and student volunteers. The REACH RCSI and Paediatric Society School Visits Volunteer Programme aims to familiarise children with healthcare professionals and overcome any apprehension about visiting the doctor or hospital. The REACH RCSI Pulse Check Challenge saw weekly visits to the RCSI Sports Hall by local primary schools to participate in this physical health education project. Student volunteers taught the participants the skill of finding, measuring, and recording their pulse rates before and after a range of physical activities. The Paediatric Society School Visits Volunteer Programme continued to visit local classrooms. February 2024 saw the 10th anniversary of the Teddy Bear Hospital in Dublin, with over 600 teddies being treated in Dublin by student volunteers and a further 150 children seeking a teddy bear check-up in Tralee.

REACH RCSI Primary Teacher CPD
July 2024 saw the 11th iteration of the REACH RCSI Summer Course for Primary School Teachers, a Department of Education approved workshop-based programme that uses the theme of the human senses to support primary school teachers in developing an interest and enthusiasm for teaching science with direct relevance to the primary science curriculum framework. Over 350 primary teachers have now participated in this five-day programme. Feedback is very positive, with 100% of participants noting increased confidence in performing STEMM activities in the classroom and recommending the course to a colleague.

UNSDGs in the community
UNSDGs in the community, now in its second year, brings together students from RCSI's Advanced Therapeutic Technologies (ATT) programme and REACH RCSI linked post-primary schools to explore the UNSDGs in Dublin City Centre. This commitment to embedding the principles and practices of Engaged Learning into RCSI's curricula aligns with the goal of ESD to 2030, Ireland's National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development, to embed sustainable development into curricula across Irish educational settings.

Student Summer Volunteer

During summer 2023, three RCSI students volunteered with RCSI Engage valued international community partner, The Olive Branch for Children ("TOBFC") Tanzania. TOBFC helps remote communities assess their primary needs and establishes programmes that target the most vulnerable. RCSI student volunteers spent the summer working with TOBFC's Mobile Medical Clinic, which operates in the most remote communities in their catchment area. The clinic provides baseline healthcare, focusing on child and maternal health, HIV testing and care, malaria testing and treatment, diagnosis and treatment of basic medical issues, wound care, family planning, blood pressure monitoring and emergency referrals to permanent health facilities.

Public Engagement
RCSI Engage sponsored two public engagement events: Pint of Science Dublin, a global science communication festival that aims to bring science to everyone, and SoapBox Science Dublin, a platform for public engagement that promotes women and non-binary scientists. RCSI staff and students shared their research with the general public at both events.

HEA Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH)
RCSI is a proud member of a six-college consortium with University College Dublin, Institute of Art and Design, Marino Institute of Education, National College of Art and Design, and Trinity College Dublin in this HEA-funded initiative to collaboratively promote and advance equality of access to higher education for under-represented groups. Collaborative initiatives include the Dublin Learning City Festival, which aims to ensure that education and learning are accessible and free for all individuals, regardless of age or cultural background, in traditional and non-traditional settings. This year's festival featured an array of RCSI learning opportunities focused on health and wellbeing, and culminated in a historic tour of RCSI. The Community Mentoring programme is a unique inter-institutional and community-based mentoring programme that sees RCSI access students mentor prospective students across Dublin City and HEA-funded 1916 Bursaries, which support students from target groups underrepresented in higher education throughout their programme. In 2023, six RCSI students were awarded HEA-funded 1916 Bursaries and a further seven access students were awarded RCSI alumni funded scholarships: Aim High (Med), Kiran Pathak (Pharmacy) and Traveller and Roma Community Scholarships.

Creative Arts Summer School
The Creative Arts Summer School, in June 2024, saw each member HEI host 60 participants from underrepresented groups for a day of creativity. The theme of the RCSI day was "Medicine makes life possible; art makes it worthwhile". Participants took part in two creative workshops: the first, facilitated by RCSI SIM team members, titled "Making an eye from scratch," and a Life Drawing Workshop led by RCSI Women on Wall's artist Will Nathans, in which participants learned fundamental skills to create their own compositional drawings. This year RCSI hosted the closing ceremony at which participants received recognition and their creative works produced during the summer school were displayed and celebrated.

The RCSI Engage, Engaged Research Awards
This Research Day programme grew significantly this year, reflecting the strategic focus to further develop Engaged Research activity to promote impactful research collaborations with local communities and the wider public. This success was evident with a marked increase in the number of entries and the introduction of an additional award category. The expansion underlines RCSI's commitment to developing stronger connections between researchers, community stakeholders, and industry partners to create meaningful societal impact. Academic partnership with Dublin City Council and Sláintecare Healthy Communities has progressed through collaborative projects such as "Uisce Cliste: Healthy Hydration for Dublin" and "Fostering Engagement and Advancing Better Health-needs Assessment Strategies (FEABHAS)", a community-based project that aims to assess the assets and health needs of three Dublin Sláintecare Healthy communities from the perspective of community members. Community-based participatory principles of equity underpin FEABHAS activities, building on existing strengths and enhancing the community's capacity.

Transition Year MiniMed, Pharmacy and Physiotherapy Programmes

Over 250 transition year students were welcomed to RCSI's Stephen's Green campus for the RCSI Transition Year MiniMed Programme. Following on from the success of the online programme during the pandemic, more than 3,600 students from all over Ireland were also provided the opportunity to gain insight into a career in healthcare by logging on to the online programmes. Throughout the week, students participated in interactive lectures and activities from a broad range of specialities, viewed a real-life Caesarean section, lung transplant and a laparoscopic surgery. MiniPharm and MiniPhysio, events also took place in Dublin and an additional MiniMed programme was held in University Hospital Waterford.

RCSI MyHealth Lecture Series
The RCSI MyHealth lecture series continued as pre-recorded, virtual events for 2022/23. This series addressed mental health, positive ageing, obesity stigma, menopause, sexual health, and vaping. The transition to virtual delivery of the RCSI MyHealth series has led to greater reach and impact of these important discussions, both nationally and internationally. The 2022/2023 series has had more than 10,000 views on YouTube. This year also saw the launch of the RCSI MyHealth podcast, giving the public a convenient way to engage with the series. By the end of the 2022/2023 series there had been more than 2,000 downloads of the podcast.

RCSI MyHealth Expert Directory
The RCSI MyHealth Expert Directory is a resource for journalists that brings together details of RCSI experts, across a range of healthcare issues and concerns, in an online listing. In support of the UN Sustainable Development Goal to promote good health and wellbeing, these academics, clinicians and researchers are willing to engage with the media in their area of expertise so they can empower people with information that leads them to better health.

Strategic Communications
RCSI's institutional communications strategy continues to underpin the university's strategic goals, by enhancing and protecting its reputation and by deepening stakeholder relationships. National and international media remained a strategic imperative. Positive coverage in Ireland remained consistently high and the volume of international coverage increased. Communicating research is a critical element of RCSI's communications strategy. National and international media coverage was achieved for research papers on breast cancer, epilepsy, tissue engineering and the impact of lockdowns on babies born during the pandemic. The university's website was redeveloped between 2018 and 2020 to ensure that stakeholders could readily find the information they need and to better showcase the expertise across the university. The site now has over 5.5 million unique page views a year. Stakeholder engagement remained a priority, with regular newsletters shared with key communities including clinician, alumni, and fellow and members.

Quality Assurance of Research Activities and Programmes
Several research activity enhancements were implemented during the reporting period. Researchers at RCSI published a total of 1632 PubMed indexed articles in 2023. The total research funding income (as measured by expenditure on existing grants) for the 23/24 financial year was €35.6 million.

FutureNeuro Centre refunded and Research & Development Achievement Award
The RCSI-led Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) research centre for chronic and rare neurological diseases, FutureNeuro, was funded for another 5 years (€12.3M in funding).

Examples of other notable funding awards include:
- European Research Council (ERC) Success: €1.87M secured under the ERC Starting Grant programme (PI: Prof Imran Sulaiman) for a programme aligned with both the Cancer and Respiratory and Critical Care Clusters. It is worth noting that RCSI ERC success has increased significantly over the last 3 year, with one ERC award per year over the last 3 year. 66% of these awards have been led by RCSI affiliated clinicians based in Beaumont Hospital.

- ~€3.6M funding secured under the HRB's Investigator Led Programme (ILP) for projects aligned with RCSI's Biomaterials, Medical Devices, and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Neurological and Psychiatric Disorders, Cancer and Population Health and Health Services Research Clusters.
- A €2.4m award from Boston Scientific for an RCSI Sponsored, Investigator Initiated CYCLOPES study which is assessing the feasibility and efficacy of an intracoronary ultrasound guided algorithm for calcium modification in patients undergoing percutaneous coronary intervention.

Royal Irish Academy

Prof David Henshall, Professor of Molecular Physiology and Neuroscience and Director, FutureNeuro SFI Research Centre, was elected as a Member of the Royal Irish Academy (MRIA), Ireland's foremost body of experts in the sciences and humanities. Election to the Academy is the highest academic accolade in this country and is testament to Prof. Henshall's extensive contribution to research.

Innovation and Commercialisation

Annual growth in RCSI's knowledge transfer performance continued with RCSI exceeding targets independently set by Knowledge Transfer Ireland for spin-out formation, licensing and industry collaboration. Industry engagement, as measured by number of agreements, exceeded targets by 30% and industry funding grew to €4.6m in 2023. RCSI was awarded several grants to support innovation activity including €1.2M from Enterprise Ireland under the KT Boost Programme and under the Innovator's Initiative programme to support spin-out creation in digital health.

RCSI Summer School

The RCSI Research Summer School (RSS) programme provides participating students with the opportunity to undertake an eight-week supervised project in their chosen area of interest or they can participate in a structured taught programme that covers core research skills. Students also get the opportunity to develop a potentially commercially viable solution to a modern healthcare problem in the annual Student Innovation Challenge. In 2024, over 152 undergraduate students from across schools participated in the RSS Programme; five summer students went overseas to collaborators of RCSI PIs e.g. South Africa, Spain, Japan; 62 students also participated in a four-week taught core research skills programme.

2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity

RCSI acknowledges the important contribution of academic integrity to upholding the highest standards of professionalism among its learners and staff. The RCSI Academic Integrity Working Group, as originally established by the Quality Committee, became the Academic Integrity Committee (AIC) in December 2023. Whereas a working group of the Quality Committee is normally established for a specific purpose, and has an expected finite duration, it was acknowledged that upholding the highest standards of academic integrity is work that is ongoing and, as such, warranted a change of status. The membership of the AIC continues to be representative of academic and professional departments across RCSI campuses, together with both undergraduate and postgraduate student representation. The AIC continues to promote knowledge and understanding of academic integrity and the importance of upholding the highest standards of it across the university.

Students registering on undergraduate and postgraduate programmes are required to sign the University's Student Agreement, indicating their agreement to adhere to all relevant policies and regulations; this includes the Academic Integrity Policy. The AIC led the revision and updating of the Academic Integrity Policy for the start of the 2024-25 academic year. The key revisions included:
  i.   introducing the broad term "*unauthorised content generation"*
 ii.   making provision for the unauthorised use of generative artificial intelligence as a breach of academic integrity
iii.   more closely aligning the policy's three response levels for incidences of academic misconduct with the QQI National Academic Integrity Network's Framework for Academic Misconduct Investigation and Case Management (2023).

To continue to support students in fulfilling their commitment to academic integrity, the university's online student academic integrity resource was also revised by the AIC to reflect the revised Academic Integrity policy this reporting period. This resource enables students to distinguish between behaviours that uphold academic integrity and those which breach it and result in academic misconduct. The resource now supports students to distinguish between the authorised and acceptable use of generative artificial intelligence and its unauthorised use. All university students must complete this online academic integrity resource on at least one occasion.

Within the university, the opportunities and challenges for all aspects of educational delivery and assessment posed by artificial intelligence have been under consideration. To this end, the Artificial Intelligence in Education Working Group was established as a working group of the Learning, Teaching & Assessment Committee within the university. One of the working strands of this working group relates to the impact of artificial intelligence on both academic integrity and assessment. The AIC convenor represents the Committee on the Working Group and leads on this strand. It is expected that the Working Group will publish guidance on the ethical use of artificial intelligence in learning, teaching and assessment in RCSI which will incorporate the highest standards of academic integrity. In addition, at the annual RCSI International Education Forum in June 2024, a key session explored the opportunities and challenges that artificial intelligence present in education, which included an assessment of its impact on academic integrity.

RCSI is a member of QQI's National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN). The Head of Registry Services, the Head of the Quality Enhancement Office and the Convenor of AIC continued to represent RCSI at NAIN and contribute to its various initiatives. The Head of the QEO is a member of the NAIN Steering Committee and presented, on behalf of NAIN at the first Asia – Middle East – Africa Conference on Academic and Research Integrity in December 2023.

In relation to the maintenance of the highest standards of professionalism in research and associated postgraduate degree programmes, RCSI research governance principles align with the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity. Postgraduate research students must sign and agree the Postgraduate Code of

Conduct on registration and must acknowledge the <u>RCSI Statement on Research Integrity</u>. All research students must complete a Research Ethics and Integrity module in their first year to ensure that they have a basic grounding in the concepts of research integrity. Postgraduate research students funded through National funding agencies (e.g., Irish Research Council, Science Foundation Ireland, Health Research Board) must also complete additional research integrity training (Epigeum, UK).

3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period

3.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives

No.	Relevant objectives	Planned actions and indicators
1.	CINNTE Recommendations 1 & 9	Develop a Data Governance Framework to support continuous review of data quality and integrity across multiple information systems.
2.	CINNTE Recommendation 2	Repeat the governance survey, first undertaken for CINNTE, on a biennial basis with presentation of the results to Council for consideration.
3.	CINNTE Recommendation 3	Update family leave policies to include information on how this leave is considered in academic promotions decisions.
4.	CINNTE Recommendation 3	Enhance the communications plan for academic promotions to further increase process knowledge. This may include enhancement of current tools such as briefing sessions, professional development meetings, peer support etc.
5.	CINNTE Recommendation 4	Communicate (supervisor) training overview to postgraduate research students for transparency regarding the expected responsibilities of supervisors.
6.	CINNTE Recommendation 5	Undertake a StEP project to facilitate the development of framework to support students to engage in educational quality and governance, in line with the strategy action "Support student leadership and Partnership", cognisant of existing RCSI leadership initiatives.
7.	CINNTE Recommendations 6 & 8	Establish an Interprofessional Working Group under the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee.
8.	CINNTE Recommendations 6 & 8	Revise the existing Interprofessional Learning Strategy to reimagine the leadership and strategic direction of IPL.
9	CINNTE Recommendation 10	Establish a task and finish project team to review graduate tracking and to identify areas for improvement.
10.	CINNTE Recommendation 11	Undertake an evaluation of stakeholder requirements to enhance (medical placement evaluation) reporting in line with the needs of stakeholders.
11.	CINNTE Recommendation 11	Establish a process for annual mapping of (medical placement) survey report owners to enhance transparency.
12.	CINNTE Recommendation 13	Further develop communications to students on the purpose of this (penalty scoring) assessment strategy. This will include detailed information on penalty scoring at induction in relevant programmes, and ongoing periodic engagement to address arising concerns.
13.	CINNTE Recommendation 15	Review the information provided to personal tutors to ensure clarity in relation to the tutor role on each of the principal undergraduate programmes.
14.	CINNTE Recommendation 16	Gather information on the current supports available for access students. Engage with appropriate learners and staff to better understand the information needs of access students.
15.	CINNTE Recommendation 17	Develop a communications plan for major changes in partnerships.

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
Finance Department	16 – 19 Sept 2024	2017
School of Medicine	25 – 28 Nov 2024	2016
Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery	13 – 15 Jan 2025	N/A

3.2.2 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

Link to Quality Reviews Schedule RCSI Internal QA/QI & Institutional Reviews Schedule

4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies

CASE STUDY 1

Title: RCSI Student Life

Keywords: Student Engagement, Information

Introduction: RCSI aims to create high-quality marketing content to give prospective students a real insight into student life. Feedback from students highlighted that, when considering an application to RCSI, they wanted to know more about the day-to-day workload, social experiences at RCSI, and life in Dublin. Many international students found it difficult to imagine what life at the University would be like; they also wanted the chance to interact with current students to address their queries or concerns before joining the University.

Initiative: RCSI's content strategy for the Student Life brand was reassessed to better support prospective students in their decision-making. The revised content is also beneficial for current students, especially those in junior years who have questions about their placements and senior years. The strategy was redeveloped to feature more of the student body, placing them at the forefront of all social media accounts under the Student Life brand. While the Marketing team produces and manages the content, significant student collaboration through the Student Ambassador programme ensures that much of the social media content is created by students, for prospective students. Examples of this initiative include:

1.   **Videos Filmed by Student Ambassadors and the Students' Union.**

The marketing department worked with Student Ambassadors from the principle undergraduate programmes, as well as the Students' Union, to create videos. Students were given vlogging cameras to film a day in their life, showcasing their accommodation, walk to university, activities in Dublin city centre, daily classes, facilities (e.g. gym), and social aspects such as clubs, societies, and college events. A particularly successful collaboration with the Students' Union resulted in behind-the-scenes vlogs during Orientation and Freshers Month.

2.   **Student Takeovers on Instagram and YouTube**

Instagram Stories were utilised as a dynamic and interactive way to engage with prospective students. Student Ambassadors took over the Student Life Instagram account to post about their day, giving audiences a live insight into a day in the life of an RCSI student. This increased engagement as users returned to check stories throughout the day. Prospective students could submit questions to be answered by current students through the Instagram Q&A function. The Marketing Department also collaborated with students on an "Ask Me Anything" series on Instagram Stories, along with a "CAO Q&A" on YouTube, where CAO students submitted questions on Instagram to be answered by Student Ambassadors in a sit-down video.

3.   **Student Stories and Money Diaries**

A recurring theme from student feedback was the desire for more financial information before starting at RCSI, especially during a cost-of-living crisis. The Marketing Department updated the Student Stories page on RCSI's website and expanded the Money Diaries section. Money Diaries is a feature where

current students share a journal of their spending for one week, helping prospective students better understand how much to budget for university.

4. **Short Form Videos to Showcase Student Events**

New short form videos of key events in the undergraduate student calendar were created. This included the White Coat Ceremony, Teddy Bear Hospital, College Ball and Results Day. These videos allow prospective students to see what social events at RCSI look like.

To successfully deliver this project, Marketing collaborated with the Student Recruitment team to ensure the content featured a diverse mix of student ambassadors, accurately representing the student body. The Web team also assisted with content consolidation, creating "Day in the Life of …" pages for the principal undergraduate programmes, providing a permanent home for the videos.

Outcome

This initiative transformed engagement with current and prospective students, showcasing the campus, events, and student life through genuine and relatable experiences shared by students.

RCSI's social media following and engagement saw immense growth, with 67.6k+ followers, 11.7 million likes, and 96.7 million views on TikTok. Over the reporting period, Instagram followers increased by 482%. Traffic to the student life section of the website also rose, becoming more qualified. These pages received 11% more active users from November 2023 to October 2024 compared to the previous year, and the bounce rate decreased from 51.6% to 22.42%, indicating that users were genuinely interested in the content and stayed on the site longer.

The repository of Q&As filmed with students helps prospective students quickly find answers to their questions online, reducing the need for direct inquiries to RCSI and positively impacting the workload and distribution of staff and student resources.

Social media comments have highlighted the positive influence of this project, with remarks like "This is why I want to be a doctor at RCSI."

External recognition of this initiative included five National Social Media Awards: Best Social Media Strategy: Third Level, Best Instagram Brand, Best TikTok Strategy: Brand, Best Social Media Advertising Team, and the National Social Media Awards Grand Prix, which recognizes the best use of social media across all industries and categories.

CASE STUDY 2

Title: Introducing Students to Cultural Diversity Training

Keywords: Cultural diversity, intersectionality, communication, cultural awareness

Introduction: RCSI, University of Medicine and Health Sciences, is considered the most internationally diverse university in Ireland, with students from over 100 countries. It was Ireland's first higher education institution to publish a Race Equality Action Plan in 2021. The introduction of cultural diversity training in the first year of the medical programme reinforces RCSI's commitment to ensuring that the student

experience is defined by respect, equality and inclusion. This has been front and centre following the aftermath of the murders of Trayvon Martin and George Floyd, as these cases heightened tensions and a focus on how to address issues related to race equality in future healthcare education curricula.

Initiative: Three factors prompted this teaching and learning initiative within the new RCSI's Transforming Health Education Project (THEP 2) curriculum. Firstly, attendance at the International Conference on Communication in Healthcare, where medical students from different ethnic backgrounds, training levels and medical schools (University of Iowa, USA, University of East Anglia, UK and RCSI) presented their specific experiences of health disparities and racism during medical training and a plea for more training to better prepare them for work in the current diverse healthcare system. Secondly, staff and student feedback following the introduction of learning community structure in THEP 2 programme; where students were mixed from different backgrounds with no preparation for the different cultural experiences they encountered and finally, the RCSI Race Equality Action Plan that calls for more awareness, education, and training so students and staff are prepared as healthcare leaders in a racially/ethnically diverse world.

The resulting initiative was the introduction of a specific training session for students on cultural sensitivities delivered in the first week of Med 1 as a critical introduction to the nuances of cultural diversity. The interactive one-hour session starts with a discussion on the nine protected equality grounds, the visible and invisible aspects of culture, diverse patient populations, and the impact of culture on health and health outcomes. The session then progresses to a reflective exercise where the students explore their own identities and how these intersect and lead to biases. The session finishes by providing the students with skills and tools of communication to better manage interactions around cultural sensitivities.

Outcome: Cultural competency in healthcare is the ability of healthcare systems to tailor care to patients by recognising and respecting diverse values, beliefs and behaviours. This important topic is being investigated further in a PhD study to develop an educational intervention to support healthcare students working effectively with patients from culturally diverse backgrounds. This research study is a combination of a systematic review exploring effective interventions from the international literature, interviews exploring the barriers and challenges that patients from Africa, Eastern Europe, Asia, South America and the Travelling community face in accessing Irish health services and communicating with healthcare staff, and the views of doctors and nurses as to what issues they believed migrant patients face using and communicating within the Irish healthcare sector.

CASE STUDY 3

Title: Introduction of a New CPD Booking System

Keywords: Quality, efficiency, CPD

Introduction: The RCSI Surgical Affairs CPD Team provides over 100 courses to 1000+ enrolled surgical and emergency medicine non-consultant hospital doctors (NCHDs). Each NCHD is eligible to undertake 3 free courses, funded by the HSE, through the CPD Support Scheme. Due to the exponential growth of RCSI's CPD offerings and enrolees over the last 4 years, the existing booking software and NCHD facing communications were time consuming, and not fit for purpose. To reduce the administrative burden, improve communication and foster independence for NCHDs, the Surgical Affairs CPD team undertook a

lean six sigma green belt project which saw the introduction and use of the Arlo CPD course management and booking system.

Initiative: The central goal of this project was to reduce email queries received from enrolled NCHDs through improved communication, and the provision of transparent guides in relation to the CPD Support Scheme processes. By addressing such queries in advance and giving NCHDs the means and guidance to better engage with these processes, the Surgical Affairs team were more able to focus on course quality enhancement. This project required close collaboration between the Surgical Affairs CPD Team and colleagues in IT, Web Design and Finance. An interesting challenge arose as there was a requirement to track how many CPD credits each enrolled doctor had used out of their yearly HSE 'allowance' for free courses. This situation is unique to Ireland, and so the global software did not have this type of logic inbuilt. Hence, Arlo's voucher system was used to help track this metric (at the backend only).

Outcome: Through the implementation of the Arlo training management system, the CPD team was able to automate approximately 10,000 annual emails relating to NCHD course bookings and reminders alone. This number is on top of the emails the team were able to reduce due to enhanced and transparent communication with their stakeholder group (introduction of terms and conditions at checkout, and the CPD Hub portal).

Each user now has access to their own CPD Hub portal which provides them with a summary of courses booked, courses which they are on the waiting list for, orders paid (and by what means – card or voucher), receipts to download, and all certificates of attendance. The introduction of this CPD Hub has also supported NCHDs to become engaged with CPD in a more independent manner, thus giving the CPD team the opportunity to focus more on quality development and course feedback analysis.

CASE STUDY 4

Title: Designing Your Life

Keywords: Career Support, Student Support

Introduction: RCSI has a multicultural student body, drawing students from across the world. Finding a career that encompasses a balanced work/life along with a clear 'pathway home' post-graduation is a key student goal. The RCSI Career team joined the community of Higher Education life design educators worldwide, who are using life design tools and techniques with their students. They created and delivered an innovative five-day Student Choice Module called 'Designing Your Life'.

Initiative: The overarching goal was to establish a module that could be embedded into curricula and adapted to suit student profiles across all schools. Design thinking is a non-linear, iterative process to challenge assumptions, redefine problems and create innovative solutions to prototype and test. There are six phases: Empathise, Accept, Define, Ideate, Prototype and Test. Stanford Life Design are the leaders in training for higher education on design thinking. Through consultation with RCSI students and graduates, University of Porto Psychology and Career Department, and the Director of Science Career Development in McMaster University along with colleagues in Stanford, the model was refined to reflect the RCSI student population. Working from concept in 2022, to first programme delivery in 2023, the RCSI Career team were excited, apprehensive, humbled and proud as students readily engaged throughout the 5-day journey culminating in a final presentation day where students shared their story and chosen Odyssey plan. The design thinking model now underpins all student career-related activities across all student cohorts on the primary university programmes. Training with Stanford Life Design, to develop the

skills and concepts, was supported by the RCSI CoMPPAS Head of Student Development and Wellbeing. The challenges encountered were multifactorial and included developing bespoke exercises taking into consideration the demographic of RCSI's student participants. Through reflection, patience, adaptability, teamwork and clear communication each challenge was addressed to create a successful programme.

Outcome: The success of the Designing Your Life Programme in Dublin prompted an additional request from PU-RCSI (a collaboration between RCSI and Perdana University in which RCSI licensed and delivered an undergraduate medicine programme) to deliver an in-person programme with the graduating class of 2024. Over 5 days, the RCSI Career team engaged with the students focusing on professional identity incorporating the RCSI Medical Graduate Profile themes of Global Doctor, Leadership and Collaboration. Perdana Faculty reflected:

- *"It was clear how well you adapted the programme culturally" … and how much it helped (the students) with professional identity development as doctors …"*
- *"Students have spoken about moving ahead in their careers with new purpose and clearer vision. We believe the impact will be lasting for this cohort. The students seem to have a sense of pride and hope for the future."*
- *"We all agreed it would have been a great asset to us all at such a key career junction."*

Examples of student reflections included:

- *"This programme has equipped me with variety of skills and strategies to tackle future challenges with regards to my career progression. It has made me realise the importance of thinking ahead and more importantly dreaming big. I know now that there are multiple pathways to reach my career goals which enable me to make the necessary preparations for my future"*
- *"I believe that the lessons learnt will change the trajectory of my life, truly".*

The value of this training has extended beyond its initial aims and objectives. It has been a unifying focus for conversations on how the career team approaches and develops career offerings in RCSI. The Designing Your Life module was initially created as a Student Choice Module for the School of Medicine. The concepts and frameworks are now also delivered across the Schools of Physiotherapy, Pharmacy & Biomolecular Sciences, and Postgraduate Studies across all academic years. The module has consistently received positive student feedback in student surveys. Relationships with pre-clinical-year students have strengthened and recognition from higher education peers has been widespread.

CASE STUDY 5

Title: Introduction of a Comprehensive Mini Emergency-Medicine Curriculum

Keywords: Curriculum Development, Student Engagement, Codevelopment

Introduction: First-year Graduate Entry Medicine (GEM) students were introduced to a one-week Student Choice Module in April 2024. The module topic was based on feedback from student-led projects carried out during the year, which focused on quality improvement to the GEM programme. For these projects, students designed curricular improvements based on their learning needs. Emergency Medicine was one of the most requested modules, with nearly one-quarter of the class signing up for it.

Initiative: A module was developed to introduce learners to Emergency Medicine (EM) in a safe and engaging learning environment. Grounded in experiential learning theory, the module focused on creating hands-on experiences, fostering discussions and observation of the EM setting, allowing students to learn through doing and observing. Students were actively involved in the design of the module content.

To provide an authentic representation of EM and to depict the patient journey both to and within the Emergency Department (ED), a variety of EM team members were involved in delivering the module: an advanced paramedic from Dublin Fire Brigade, an EM registrar, a medical social worker, an advanced nurse practitioner in minor injuries, and a clinical nurse specialist in frailty. After several meetings with the EM team and stakeholders from the GEM1 and GEM2 programmes, a comprehensive mini-EM module was designed. Teaching activities included lectures, case-based learning, workshops with task trainers and manikins, Kahoot games, and a serious game called FullCode. The Dublin Fire Brigade provided an ambulance with an advanced paramedic, allowing students to familiarise themselves with pre-hospital equipment and learn about life-saving procedures. Students were introduced to the ED environment, observing equipment from the triage room to the resuscitation area.

The module began with an introduction to the simulation environment in the mock resus room on campus, followed by lectures on EM care in Ireland, patient triage, and human factors in patient safety. These were followed by group discussions. On day 2, students participated in a First Aid course led by a paramedic. Day 3 featured a minor injuries workshop where students practiced applying back slabs on each other. Additionally, there were two parallel sessions: a paramedic-led demonstration in the back of the Dublin Fire Brigade ambulance and a registrar-led tour of the ED. Day 4 focused on case-based learning, addressing life-threatening and life-changing conditions, along with various skills stations. There were four workshops: airway assessment, C-spine immobilisation and pelvic binder application, IV access and phlebotomy, and a Basic Life Support station. In between stations, students used the FullCode simulation game, which allowed them to care for ED patients in a virtual setting appropriate for their level of expertise. Students also enjoyed participating in Kahoot quiz games, with winners receiving prizes. The final day focused on common presentations to the ED, as requested by the students, and emphasised integrating knowledge through simulation. The module concluded with a summative assessment in the form of a simulation exercise.

Outcome: This pilot module demonstrated that GEM students are interested in EM and that EM has a role within the curriculum, despite it not being formally taught in this programme up to now. The students completed a post-module survey, with an 80% response rate. All respondents agreed that EM has a role within the curriculum, and that it increased their confidence levels when approaching an undifferentiated patient. The overall rating of the module was 4.6 on a 5-point Likert scale. Simulation-based education is a promising modality for implementing an EM curriculum.

The module was presented at RCSI's International Education Forum in June 2024 (both oral and poster presentations) and has been approved for poster presentation at the Academy of Medical Educators (AoME) conference in Birmingham in 2024, as well as at the Pre-Hospital Care Council (PHECC) Research Conference the same year. The module will be offered again next year, with the inclusion of an introduction to toxicology and the use of point-of-case ultrasound in the ED.

CASE STUDY 6

Title: Placing Pride in Medical Education
Keywords: Curriculum Development, LGBT, EDI

Introduction: Although LGBT people experience disparities in accessing health care and are more susceptible to a broad range of medical conditions, medical curricula, including that of RCSI, traditionally incorporate few, if any, learning opportunities to educate students about LGBT healthcare. Lack of health care professional knowledge of their health needs is identified by LGBT people as one of the key contributors to disparities in their health care. This lack of education around LGBT health was identified by students in the graduate entry medicine programme year 1 as a quality gap in their curriculum.

Initiative: To address this gap, a student choice module focusing on LGBT health, designed in collaboration with a direct entry student (a member of the Pride society at RCSI) was offered to the first year of the graduate entry medicine class at RCSI. The aim was to deliver teaching to a small group incorporating a mix of informal lectures, technology-enhanced, experiential and self-directed learning. The module was developed in collaboration with the RCSI Pride society, a colleague from the school of social work and social policy at Trinity College Dublin (who also contributed to the module), the clinical lead of the national gender service and the physician from the gay men's health service. Learning opportunities in the module included rainbow badge training provided by the Pride society, talks on theoretical aspects of human sexuality, the history of the gay community's response to the emergence of HIV in the 1980s in Ireland, the delivery of care to the trans community from the perspective of the clinical lead and a session on sexual history taking with an emphasis on sensitivity and appropriate approach to questioning. Students were also provided with the opportunity to view the RISE project about the stigma experienced by people living with HIV, an opportunity to take a sexual history from a simulated patient and to reflect on their patient interaction, and self-directed learning with suggested reading. Students answered quiz questions in an anonymous fashion at the beginning and end of the week to assess their knowledge around health needs of LGBT people, disparities experienced by the community, knowledge about HIV and comfort with discussions around sexuality. At the end of the week, students were asked to write a short reflection on how they would be advocates for better LGBT health based on their experience of the module.

Outcome: All students in the class were offered participation in the module as one of 6 choice options. 11 of 88 students were assigned to the module, of which for three students it was their first choice. Teaching was successfully delivered with face-to-face time and self-directed learning time each day over one week. Based on the anonymous survey performed at the beginning and end of the week there was significantly improved student understanding of health needs of LGBT people, of specific health needs of the trans community, of disparities and barriers faced by LGBT people in healthcare settings, improved knowledge regarding the transmission, prevention and treatment of HIV, improved understanding of the stigma experienced by people living with HIV and improved student comfort in discussing sexuality and sexual history. Students had the opportunity to provide qualitative feedback through their reflections which were generally positive. It was clear students, both those who identified as members of the LGBT community and those who indicated that they did not, benefitted from the module. A comment from one student that reflected common qualitative themes was as follows:

"Although I am not myself a member of the LGBTQ+ community, I can make myself a visible advocate through signage, statements, and advocacy work. I really appreciated being able to learn more this week from healthcare providers trailblazing a path for LGBTQ+ healthcare and hope to continue to learn from LGBTQ+ providers and allies."

In summary, this innovative student choice educational opportunity demonstrates that medical students' knowledge of LGBT people's health needs and comfort in discussing them, which are essential to improving the quality of health outcomes for this minority group, can be improved by dedicated teaching on the subject. The next step in the development of this teaching is to partner with students as part of a student engagement project to further enhance the learning opportunities for students about LGBTQ+ health and to scale the teaching to provide it to all RCSI students.

CASE STUDY 7

Title: Artificial Intelligence in Education Working Group

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Teaching & Learning, Assessment, Governance

Introduction: In November 2022, the release of ChatGPT caused a mixture of excitement and consternation in the education sphere and placed generative artificial intelligence (AI) firmly at the centre of the agenda. Like all higher education institutions, RCSI was faced with the challenge of understanding both the potential and pitfalls of this new technology and educating staff and students about its responsible use.

Initiative: A decision was taken to establish an AI in Education working group as a sub-committee of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee. Its stated mission was "to coordinate activities designed to understand the impact of AI on Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) at RCSI and support the development of guidance and training for its ethical use". The group was established in October 2023 with 20 members, spanning professional services and academic staff from across the Schools, a representative from the Bahrain campus, and five student representatives from undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. The working group operated through three focused subgroups (Ethics, Academic Integrity, and Educational Opportunities), each with dedicated student representation. This structure proved highly effective, delivering:

- A comprehensive ethical framework for AI use.
- Guidelines for generative AI integration in education.
- Practical FAQs for RCSI educators and students.
- A strategic opportunities assessment.
- A centralised Moodle hub for AI resources.

The ethical framework for AI and the guidelines for generative AI were approved by the Academic Council and Medicine and Health sciences Board in September 2024.

Leveraging RCSI's Student Engagement and Partnership (StEP) programme, working group members also secured funding for two student-led initiatives focused on AI literacy. The members followed a design thinking methodology to structure the collaboration between students and staff to developed two innovative educational resources:

1. Can GPT do my homework? Four short, animated videos exploring key affordances as well as issues of concern regarding student use of generative AI in their studies.
2. AI challenges: a series of ethical dilemmas that allowed students to explore the consequences of the decisions they made in relation to AI use. The scenarios were aligned with their career journeys, with the early ones focused on the types of dilemmas they might encounter in university – for example, related to AI use and academic integrity – while subsequent one related to their future careers as health care professionals.

The students are now engaging in promotional activities to raise awareness of the resources among students.

Outcome: The working group's impact is ongoing. It has engaged in awareness raising activities through presentations to the Academic Council, the Medicine and Health Sciences Board and at an AI-focused session of RCSI's International Education Forum in June 2024. It has engaged with Staff Learning and Development on the provision of training in generative AI and has delivered a session for academic staff on the ethical use of generative AI as part of RCSI's Health Professions Education Centre's Education Hub series. It has also collaborated with RCSI's Academic Integrity Committee to update the institution's

Academic Integrity Policy to incorporate guidance on the use of generative AI. It is envisioned that a continuing focus, awareness raising and education are required to inform and evolve thinking, to enable RCSI to respond to both the opportunities and challenges afforded by artificial intelligence.

CASE STUDY 8

Title: 'Pathologies Through Time': Medical Humanities in Student Choice

Keywords: Medical Humanities, Personal and Professional Development

Introduction: Student Choice at RCSI provides an individualised learning experience for year 1 and 2 medical students, supporting them to broaden their academic scope and develop their personal and professional identity. The Medical Humanities is one of five major themes in Student Choice but, in terms of the modules available to students, remains under-represented. RCSI Library Heritage Collections sits at the intersection of the humanities and the health sciences in RCSI and is uniquely positioned to enhance student learning in this area. In March 2024, RCSI Library Heritage Collections introduced a new Medical Humanities module in the history of medicine as part of Student Choice: 'Pathologies Through Time: Health Then and Now'.

Initiative: Pathologies Through Time aims to complement the core medical curriculum by increasing students' understanding of the historical, social, and cultural contexts for contemporary medical education, research and practice. It is a week-long module, running 2-3 times across the academic year for 12-15 students each time, and is designed and led by professional archive and library staff from RCSI Library Heritage Collections, with the support of colleagues from RCSI SIM.

Students are introduced to key concepts in the historical development of health and healthcare in a range of classroom, simulated clinical, and community settings. Learning activities prompt students to consider similarities and differences in historical and modern approaches to the study, diagnosis, and treatment of disease, the evolution of patient-centred care, and ethics and power in medicine.

Day 1-2: Classroom and College
RCSI Library Heritage Collections collects, preserves, and curates material relating to the development of healthcare in Ireland and the history of RCSI. Access to Heritage Collections' holdings is a unique feature of the module, and students spend the first two days engaging in hands-on interaction with historical resources dating back 200 years including instruments and devices, archives and artefacts, as well as antiquarian books and medical pamphlets. This material (otherwise rarely, if ever, seen by students or staff) is selected in advance by module leaders, and grouped thematically in several stations according to specialty e.g. surgery, dermatology, ophthalmology, anaesthesiology etc. Working in small groups and rotating around stations, students research and respond to a series of prompt questions relating to the material before them. Following a series of rotations, students feed their research findings back to the wider class, with each successive group adding to the cumulative body of understanding that emerges from this process.

Day 3: Clinical
Day 3 of the module is delivered in collaboration with colleagues in RCSI SIM. Based in the mock operating theatre, this session aims to expand on concepts encountered on Day 1 and Day 2. Presented with a cranial neurosurgical scenario, students are encouraged to compare and contrast historical and modern responses to this scenario as part of a facilitated discussion with module leaders and SIM technicians.

Day 4: Community
The module focus shifts from the practitioner to the patient perspective on Day 4 with a visit to 14 Henrietta Street, a social history museum of life in Dublin. This session focuses specifically on public health and the influence of social determinants of health such as socioeconomic status, housing conditions and access to amenities, diet and health behaviours, and community cohesion.

Day 5: Reflections
The module concludes with a series of reflective student presentations. Students are asked to identify key moments from their experience over the previous four days and to reflect individually on each of these moments or elements through the medium of one of the five senses. This exercise encourages students to think creatively about the experiences they find meaningful and to reflect critically on the reasons for this, including whether they could connect this to wider course learnings or personal experience, or whether their assumptions, values, or beliefs were challenged by this experience.

Outcome: Pathologies Through Time enhances the academic experience for medical students at RCSI by employing humanities perspectives and pedagogies to explore elements of healthcare education, research, and practice. It enhances teaching capacity among professional staff in the RCSI Library Heritage Collections, empowering them to contribute meaningfully to the student learning experience beyond the scope of the traditional medical curriculum. It supports Personal and Professional Identity Development as a core pillar of learning in RCSI.

Student feedback for the first iteration of the module was captured as part of the RCSI Student Pulse Survey for Semester 2 2023/24. Survey results indicated overall positive evaluation by participating students, with positive responses (Agree or Strongly Agree) accounting for 93.75% of total responses across eight standardised questions (n=4). Free-text responses submitted as part of this survey were similarly encouraging: *'This was overall my favourite thing in Med 1, it was so fun working with coordinators who were so passionate about what they do. It really made me realise how incredible medicine is and how much amazing things previous students and professors of the school did. One hundred percent would do it again if I had the opportunity, I never had a week go by so quickly in my entire academic career.'*

The results of this survey combined with learnings from the initial module rollout in March 2024 led module leaders to identify additional format and assessment enhancements for further iterations of Pathologies Through Time. It also led directly to the initiation of a Student Engagement and Partnership (StEP) Level 2 project to further evaluate teaching, learning, and assessment strategies for interdisciplinary studies in humanities and the arts in medical education. This student-staff partnership project was completed over the course of 8 weeks in summer 2024 in collaboration with one of the students from the initial cohort of Pathologies Through Time participants.

Pathologies Through Time was referenced in a recent paper by Dr Orla O'Donovan, Senior Lecturer in the School of Applied Social Studies at University College Cork, as an example of the role of archives and historical collections in re-evaluating received narratives within academic disciplines and higher education (Órla O'Donovan, University 'dude walls' must fall, Community Development Journal, 2024; bsae050, https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsae050). The Pathologies Through Time module is now a regular fixture in Student Choice as of the beginning of the 2024/25 academic year.

CASE STUDY 9

Title: RCSI Conferring Ceremony Review

Keywords: Student experience, conferring ceremony, collaboration

Introduction: Conferring ceremonies are a significant and memorable milestone for graduands and their families, and a highlight of the year for faculty and staff. Over recent years, driven by a growing student body, the duration of the RCSI conferring ceremonies had lengthened considerably, impacting the experience for everyone attending. Reflecting the growth in student numbers expected over the coming years, and an expansion in the number of programmes offered at RCSI, the Conference and Events team initiated a strategic review of the ceremonies aimed at identifying ways of improving the conferring experience while maintaining its academic significance and sense of occasion.

Initiative: The review, which began in November 2023, had an ambitious goal: to reduce the ceremony duration to a maximum of two hours, respecting attendees' time, while retaining a meaningful experience to celebrate the occasion. Making a change to a ceremony of such traditional significance presented challenges and required careful consideration. Some of the challenges included balancing the expectations of students, families, and faculty who valued the traditional ceremony elements while acknowledging the need for improved efficiencies. Additionally, with larger numbers of candidates anticipated at future ceremonies, implementing the new format required detailed contingency planning to accommodate variability in attendance.

The key steps in the review included consultation with key internal stakeholders and undertaking a detailed forensic analysis of the ceremony's components, focusing on areas where time could be saved without compromising on tradition and experience. Surveys were issued to graduates and the team conducted a detailed benchmarking exercise, gathering data from several universities including QUB, Harvard, Karolinska, UCD, UCC, Imperial College, Trinity College Dublin and the University of Galway. Stakeholder engagement and collaboration was essential to this initiative's success, with critical input from students, academic leaders, and operational staff. The student body provided insights into their ideal graduation experience, while Heads of Schools, faculty and professional team members helped ensure that the revised format maintained the academic integrity of the ceremony.

Cross-departmental cooperation ensured that each area (academic services, facilities, and event planning) aligned on a shared vision and goal. In additional to internal stakeholders, the National University of Ireland offered insights, and were happy to support the adjustments for the future conferring ceremonies. Key institutional stakeholders contributed logistical support and identified potential scheduling or procedural conflicts, which were quickly resolved through collaborative planning sessions.

After careful discussions with the Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancelor and stakeholders, several changes were implemented. The order of proceedings was streamlined, speeches were shortened, and it was decided to present parchments offstage. Awards were presented during the conferring dinner, creating a more intimate and relaxed setting for these acknowledgments. In addition, photographs and the reading of In Absentia names were excluded, further reducing time.

Outcome: This initiative demonstrates RCSI's adaptability and commitment to continuous improvement. Furthermore, it has had a significant and lasting impact on both the student experience and broader institutional operations. The adjustments were successfully trialled at the May 2024 conferring ceremonies, with the School of Medicine Conferring ceremony reduced to one hour 35 minutes from over three hours, while the Higher Degree ceremony concluded in just one hour. Feedback

from graduates and attendees was overwhelmingly positive, with 87% finding the revised ceremony length ideal and graduates rating their experience at 4.5 out of 5.

The change in format allowed for a more engaging and celebratory atmosphere, giving graduates and their families the opportunity to fully appreciate the significance of the day without the burden of an excessively long event. This approach helped maintain the integrity of the ceremony while making it more accessible and enjoyable.

The strategic approach taken to the review and the careful management of the change will ensure that the new format will endure and that future generations of students will enjoy a ceremony that preserves the academic tradition and sense of occasion while recognising the practicalities of time. Furthermore, the decision to move awards and certificates to other settings, like the conferring dinner, will provide a more intimate space for recognising academic achievements, strengthening connections between the university and its now-alumni.

One unexpected but positive outcome has been the opportunity to rethink other areas of event management across the institution, with cross-departmental collaboration proving invaluable. This initiative has sparked further discussions about how other event-related processes and ceremonies can be similarly enhanced in the future. The streamlined conferring ceremonies have not only delivered a more efficient and enjoyable event for all involved but have also contributed to a culture of continuous improvement at RCSI, benefiting both learners and institutional operations.

CASE STUDY 10

Title: HR Hub: Enhancing Employee Engagement and Efficiency

Keywords: Human resources, staff support, policies and procedures

Introduction: A new RCSI Human Resources (HR) platform was needed to streamline processes, improve communication, and enhance overall employee satisfaction. This platform would replace the previous HR page on the staff portal and would aim to address the challenges faced by the HR department in managing employee engagement and administrative tasks.

Initiative: A collaborative project was undertaken with the IT department and supported by senior leaders. This approach was instrumental in overcoming the challenges of access to the old platform. The key steps included in the hub design were:

- Development and deployment of a user-friendly interface accessible to all employees.
- Integration of existing HR systems and automated workflows for routine tasks (e.g. family leave applications and payroll management) to provide a seamless experience.
- Creation of a comprehensive employee engagement module featuring HR policies and procedures, benefits, learning, development opportunities, and recognition programs.

The HR Hub was made accessible via Workvivo, and employees are redirected to the new Hub automatically from the Staff Portal. In February 2024, the HR Hub was launched as a central digital platform for all HR activities. It was promoted to staff and is hosted on SharePoint and accessible by all staff without using a VPN.

Outcome: The user-friendly design and supporting guides facilitated a smooth transition, resulting in significant improvements in HR efficiency, employee engagement, and overall satisfaction. This comprehensive approach brought substantial benefits in streamlining HR operations activities and

improving access to HR services. The institution now has access to anonymised data, allowing HR to tailor and focus services, based on staff interests, while ensuring their privacy. This data helps HR identify the most popular content related to policies and procedures, and so, better understand and meet employee needs. Significant impacts include:

- Improved efficiency in HR processes, reducing the time required for routine tasks.
- Consolidation of all policy information and commonly requested forms in one place, creating a one-stop shop for all HR queries and information.
- Positive feedback from employees, highlighting the platform's user-friendly nature and effectiveness.

Since its launch in February, the Hub has received 55,034 employee site visits, enhancing employee engagement. By analysing user interactions, HR can now refine and optimise the content to better serve future users. Additionally, due to the success of this project, HR are now looking into opportunities to further enhance services through the use of technology, including the potential use of AI Bots to elevate the employee experience.

CASE STUDY 11

Title: Flipped Classroom Blended Learning in the Laboratory Sciences for Scalability and Student Success

Keywords: Flipped Classroom, Blended Learning, Laboratory Sciences

Introduction: Over the past decade, the Chemistry Department at RCSI has implemented a flipped classroom blended learning model in response to increased student enrolments across its Medicine, Physiotherapy, Pharmacy, and Advanced Therapeutic Technologies programmes. This initiative sought to ensure quality and consistency in laboratory-based education while managing large cohorts effectively. By leveraging digital resources and pre-laboratory preparation, the department has successfully maintained high levels of student engagement and performance amidst rising student numbers.

Initiative: The Chemistry Department's shift to flipped classroom blended learning involved several key strategies designed to accommodate up to 6,500 students annually, with each session limited to 52 participants. Recognising the limitations of physical lab space, especially during the pandemic, the department optimised space usage and instituted up to 22 lab repetitions per experiment to comply with social distancing. Central to this initiative was a content creation drive, resulting in over 50 laboratory experiments filmed and packaged into Moodle Lessons. This resource bank, which has achieved approximately 250,000 views across YouTube and Panopto, allows students to access experimental procedures and foundational knowledge at their convenience.

The flipped classroom model is centred around pre-practical assignments, peer collaboration via online forums, and video-based lab techniques. These videos specifically support the development of core laboratory skills that students practise in the lab sessions and are especially valuable for the MPharm degree, where students' competencies are further assessed through the Observational Structural Practical Exams (OSPEs). This structured approach ensures students are adequately prepared and have

a solid understanding of the practical skills essential for laboratory work. Digital Enhanced Learning (DEL) resources further reinforce learning, supporting students through flexible, self-paced content that is easily transferable to other disciplines and campuses.

Outcome: This model has demonstrated significant success in both student satisfaction and academic performance. Completion rates for Continuous Assessment (CA) tasks increased from 65% in 2014 (n=350) to 96% in 2023 (n=530). Student satisfaction also reflects a positive trend, with annual feedback ratings averaging between 77% and 92% in recent years. These results underscore the effectiveness of the flipped classroom approach in supporting academic growth and maintaining student success levels despite an increase in student population.

In addition to accommodating a larger student body, this approach fosters a resilient and transferable framework, one that has successfully scaled to meet the demands of a modern laboratory-based curriculum. This initiative not only meets the immediate educational needs of the Chemistry Department but also offers a robust model adaptable to other laboratory sciences, ensuring that RCSI continues to deliver high-quality, student-centred learning experiences.

CASE STUDY 12

Title: PPI and Engaged Research for Postgraduate Students: A Pilot & Evaluation of a National Doctoral Module

Keywords: Public and Patient Involvement (PPI), postgraduate, research

Introduction: In Ireland, the National PPI Ignite Network, funded by a €5m HRB/ Research Ireland grant, aims to enhance research relevance and impact through Public and Patient Involvement (PPI). A core focus of the Network, of which RCSI is a lead site, is education and training. While all Network sites provided training, there was no standard approach. A first-of-its-kind national module targeted at doctoral students was co-designed by the Network. RCSI and University College Cork (UCC) piloted the module in April 2024.

Initiative: In 2023, more than 40 academics, students, patients, and patient organisations/charities from across the PPI Ignite Network co-designed a national Level 9 NFQ, 5 ECTS module for postgraduate students. This collaborative effort involved agreeing the learning outcomes, structure (eight two-hour workshops), content and assessment for the module at a national level, guided by the PPI Ignite Network's Learning Outcomes for PPI Education, and underpinned by the Network Values: Respect, Trust, Flexibility, Transparency, Empowerment & Power Sharing, Collaboration & Partnership, Equity & Inclusion. Case-based and active learning principles incorporating technology-enhanced learning elements were used to inform the design of the eight workshops, to be co-delivered in a blended format by teams of academics and patients/patient organisations.

The module was piloted by RCSI and UCC in April 2024 with twenty-nine students (14 RCSI; 15 UCC). It was co-delivered by staff from both institutions in collaboration with PPI contributors and charity organisation representatives who presented at in-person workshops and facilitated student discussions online. The module was structured as one in-person day to deliver the first four workshops (9th April UCC, 11th April RCSI) with the remaining workshops delivered online weekly thereafter for three weeks (combining delivery to RCSI & UCC students). The assessment was multimodal, focusing on application

of learning: a presentation (20%); critical reflective log (20%) and PPI plan development (60%), and formative feedback was provided to students. Given the national interest in the pilot, evaluation was of utmost importance and integrated into the module planning. Anonymous surveys were developed to assess whether individual workshop and overall module learning outcomes were met, as well as to critique communication and organisational aspects of the module delivery. Students were asked to complete the surveys after each workshop (via on-screen QR code), and to complete an overall end of module survey. Facilitators and guest speakers were also asked to provide feedback on their experiences of module involvement via anonymous survey.

Outcome: The module feedback from students and external contributors was positive. Most students agreed/strongly agreed that workshop learning outcomes were met (92%) and that there was good explanation of workshop subject matter (97%). The evaluation also highlighted opportunities for improvement, and feedback received is being used to refine the module for future delivery in RCSI and to inform a national quality improvement plan with UCC to support national delivery of the module. Partnering with patients and patient organisations in delivery of the module ensured their voice was embedded throughout and their insights were highlighted by students as an informative and meaningful part of the module. This aligns with RCSI's Strategy Action 2: Grow engagement and involvement with patients, the public, and our community.

Feedback from students:
'Learning about the different arguments (disability-based, moral, policy, & methodological). This terminology, among other, was interesting because it allowed me to name and understand things I didn't have words to previously describe.'
'The videos are really helpful hearing different perspectives The short activities really good too.'

The module provides a model for others to follow internationally when working with patients/public, and organisations to co-design modules. In RCSI, the impact of the module is already evident. Students have shared plans to incorporate PPI into their doctoral projects, including seeking seed funding through the RCSI PPI Ignite Network Office.

The pilot aligned with RCSI's Values & Principles (Respect, Collaboration, Scholarship, Innovation, Quality, Engagement, EDI, Sustainability) by demonstrating a collaborative, innovative and sustainable approach to postgraduate education, equipping the doctoral scholars with skills and knowledge to begin to embed PPI into their research. The module resources were officially launched at the National PPI Festival 2024 on 1st October 2024 for other higher education institutions to use and adapt for local delivery. The revised module will be sent to the RCSI Awards and Qualifications Committee in collaboration with the School of Postgraduate Studies and will be offered annually.

CASE STUDY 13

Title: The EDI Unit's 'StEPS' to Embed the Student Voice and Enrich Student Life

Keywords: Student Voice, Personal Growth, Skills Development, Collaboration

Introduction: The RCSI EDI unit undertook to enhance its strategic workplan by expanding its scope to engage with students to (1) ensure the student voice informs its strategy and actions and (2) to create a platform for students to enhance their student experience and education by pursing topics of interest not explicitly included in their programme of study. Student inclusion in the EDI unit's activity supports Action 7 in RCSI's 2023 – 2027 Strategic Plan, Innovating for a Healthier Future, which aims to enhance

the student experience by creating/providing opportunities for social engagement as well as to support personal growth and skills development, within the pillar Transforming Education and Student Success.

Initiative: The EDI unit engaged with the RCSI Students' Union, the Postgraduate Students' Union and the leadership of student societies (in particular the Pride Society and the Health & Wellbeing Society) to undertake this project. Colleagues in Students Services supported by promoting the EDI unit's call for student representatives on three forums. This was facilitated through their weekly newsletter, through social media activity, and by asking student groups to repost EDI content.

Student members were appointed to the EDI Committee (EDIC) and the three EDI Fora (Ending sexual violence, Supporting survivors and Promoting consent (ESP), Race Equality (REF) and VisABILITY). Representation and membership have evolved over the past two years, during which various approaches have been adopted. As a result of students' busy schedules and regular changes to their physical locations (e.g. on campus, on placement or travelling during the holidays), the mainstreaming of videoconferencing (since Covid-19) facilitated a regular and reliable way to connect with students.

The current EDIC and Fora meeting schedules and agenda formats have achieved the goal of embedding the student voice and perspective throughout the year. There is now a programme of activities which encompasses an active and ongoing framework for engaging students, which also includes succession planning.

As the EDIC and Fora each have a Senior Management Team (SMT) sponsor, students and SMT members a direct line to each other and there is a standing 'student voice' agenda item at each meeting. SMT leaders support this symbiotic relationship by taking on board the messages and activities delivered by the students at meetings.

Outcome: There have been several benefits from embedding students in EDI activities. One benefit has been the broadened diversity of lived experiences represented in the EDIC and fora, with students of diverse age, socio-economic status, nationality, ethnicity, gender, disability and religion contributing. In turn, students can gain practical professional experience in public speaking, creating presentations, project management, event management, report writing, research and analysis; skillsets that will support their preparation for careers following graduation.

While there has not yet been a dedicated evaluation of student engagement experience with the EDI unit, a Student Pulse survey in Spring 2024 provided data and insights into the EDI Unit's impact and awareness amongst students. In addition, as part of the consultation for the EDI Strategy 2024-2027, the EDI Unit conducted a student survey to find out how it could communicate more effectively with students and what type of initiatives the students want to see from the EDI Unit. These findings help the EDI unit to continue, refine and introduce relevant activities.

Student engagement in EDI activities has generated unexpected outcomes. First, collaborating with students has given license to discuss topics that staff members may not feel appropriate to broach themselves. For example, students proposed the event, 'The Female Orgasm…', which explored themes related to women's sexual health, both physical and emotional, as part of the annual student Sexual Health & Wellbeing campaign. Collaborating with students has also helped staff members to hone their communication skills for student audiences and set realistic goals for the time and scale of co-creation projects.

Student representation on EDIC and Fora is further enhanced by the EDI Unit's decision to sponsor three StEP projects per academic year which supports staff and student collaboration on research projects with an EDI theme. Participating in this programme has generated even more EDI-related projects than the unit could have hoped to achieve and broadens the network of EDI champions across the university. Moreover, the Race Equality Action Plan 2, Summer 2024 StEP project, validated a new method for how the EDI unit develops action plans to ensure the student voice is involved and helps the unit achieve their work outputs. In addition, when students are involved in the day-to-day activities in the unit, the team learns more about how to foster engagement in an ongoing way, rather than just at EDIC or Fora meetings. There have been only benefits from working with students; it is always fun, novel and exciting to see the great engagement achieved.

CASE STUDY 14

Title: Transgender healthcare in medical education: Improving awareness of the challenges, and opportunities, for undergraduate pharmacy and medical students

Keywords: EDI, transgender, medical education

Introduction: The design of a new integrated MPharm programme in 2022 presented the opportunity to introduce a wide range of inclusive, and gender-related healthcare issues as part of a new module being offered to third year students called, Men and Women's Health (now known as Sex, Gender and Health (SGH)). Access to healthcare for transgender patients is fraught with challenges such as lack of knowledge and understanding by healthcare professionals (HCPs), stigma and discrimination, and the absence of, or adherence to, international gender-affirming care guidelines. More recently (2022), Ireland was ranked the worst, out of 27 European countries, in terms of their provision of trans-specific healthcare.

Initiative: The module lead (Department of Chemistry) and the module advisor (Department of Health Psychology) met to discuss the content of the proposed SGH module, building on many topics that were already being taught in the pharmacy programme. The module was specifically designed to comprehensively cover all aspects of how sex and gender impact health outcomes, from normal development of reproductive organs and their functioning, through health promotion, and therapeutic strategies in conditions affecting men and women at various stages of life, from sexual maturity through to contraception, pregnancy, breastfeeding, menopause and andropause. Going beyond the traditional consideration of men's and women's health only, all aspects of pharmaceutical care of sexual and gender minority populations and societal considerations such as gender-based violence were also incorporated. The goal of the module is to provide foundational scientific, and clinical knowledge and skills to pharmacy students relevant to supporting patients gender-related and reproductive health needs throughout the life-course. To support this, new lecture topics were introduced including gender and health, men's health psychology and health promotion, and transgender care (TGC).

The TGC lecture, delivered by the module advisor, was designed to give students a sound grounding and understanding in appropriate vocabulary and relevant gender terms, as well as a succinct profile of the key health challenges and obstacles to care often experienced by transgender patients. Importantly, clear guidelines on good practice when interacting with transgender patients were outlined as well as identifying the central role pharmacists (and other HCPs) can have in improving care and health outcomes for this population. Central to the development of the TGC lecture/seminar (as well as other lectures in the module) was the inclusion of stakeholder's who could speak to the lived experience of

the transgender community, particularly in relation to their experience with healthcare services. The module developers reached out to the Transgender Equality Network in Ireland (TENI) and with their support have co-delivered this seminar to pharmacy students for the last number of years. More recently (2024) this lecture was delivered as part of a module to medical students. An ongoing challenge is consideration of the capacity of TENI to continue to support this educational activity given the demand on their resources already, particularly if this offering were to be expanded within the RCSI curricula.

Outcome: The TGC teaching and learning experience has been very well-received by students. This innovation in pharmacy and medical education promotes visibility and awareness, within the student body, of the disadvantages and discrimination experienced by members of this community. It also provides these future healthcare leaders with clear and easily adopted practices to ensure more holistic, inclusive and patient-centred care in the future. Learning was augmented by including a transgender patient case in the simulated patient communications sessions of this module. The inclusion of a guest speaker adds a critical voice to the lived experience of this community.

As part of the RCSI Research Summer School 2024, a project aimed at amplifying and enhancing the current TGC offering in RCSI was conducted, using an inter-professional approach. This proposed half-day workshop will address inequalities in transgender healthcare by increasing core competencies (e.g. communication, teamwork) in pre-graduate healthcare students. The outline of this teaching and learning activity (lesson plan, learning outcomes etc) has been co-designed with students and will be co-delivered with student peer educators complemented by public-patient involvement from TENI. Approaching this learning enhancement in a student-partnership way, as well as the inclusion of key stakeholders (e.g. TENI) ensures the inter-professional teaching activity is distinctly inclusive and collaborative in its design as well as authentic and empowering in its impact. This proposed experiential learning activity has been specifically designed to operationalise and evaluate the impact of an interactive transgender healthcare teaching activity aimed at improving competencies and communication skills using an inter-professional approach incorporating pharmacy, medical and physiotherapy students. This approach will generate further and experiential collaboration between students, staff, and external experts and will create a dynamic learning environment. Furthermore, it will facilitate an innovative learning opportunity for multi-disciplinary healthcare students to share discipline specific knowledge while simultaneously gaining important trans-specific (and inclusive) communication skills and professional competencies. Delivering and evaluating the impact of, transgender healthcare education, with pre-graduate healthcare students is an effective way to create future healthcare leaders who can act as allies and advocates for this disadvantaged patient population.

CASE STUDY 15

Title: Leading innovation in sustainable healthcare and planetary health in medical education

Keywords: Sustainability, Medical Education, Curriculum Development

Introduction: The climate crisis is reaching an irreversible tipping point and given the interface between environmental change and human health, there is an increasing international mandate to integrate themes of sustainability, climate change into the health professional curriculum. Whilst healthcare saves lives, it also contributes to significant environmental damage. For example, anaesthetic gases, single use plastics, and over-prescription of medications all cause cumulative harm. To date, sustainable healthcare

has not been a standard part of the medical curriculum and RCSI have been at the vanguard of addressing this within their health professional curricula.

Initiative: The teaching team within RCSI sought to embed planetary health and sustainable healthcare teaching across the undergraduate curricula so that RCSI graduates are equipped to practice sustainable health care once they qualify as health professionals.

As a first step, RCSI led out on a project known as CHIME Ireland (Climate Health in Medical Education) in conjunction with the Irish Doctors for the Environment. This project brought together public health educators from all the Irish medical schools to agree a planetary health curriculum for medical students. Through workshops, the institutions worked together to identify key topics and learning outcomes, and subsequently developed a proposed curriculum on planetary health for medical students that educators could implement in their own institutions.

This curriculum has now been spiralled through RCSI's new medical undergraduate programme and is delivered throughout year one and two, with students completing a team proposal for a sustainable healthcare intervention at the end of the second year. In addition, a student choice module is delivered three times a year for those students who wish to specialise further in sustainable healthcare, and this module is available to students fully online. The flexibility of the online option is expected to increase the number of students who can undertake it.

In addition, a newly developed continuing professional development (CPD) course in Sustainable Healthcare was developed and launched as a course commencing September 2024. It is one of only a few in the world and is free of charge. By removing financial barriers, RCSI aims to scale course participation and completion by encouraging healthcare professionals from diverse backgrounds around the globe to enhance their skills to adapt to the challenges that climate change will present them within clinical settings. Since the launch, 150 participants have enrolled on the course. The course encourages participants all over the world to develop sustainable healthcare projects in their own healthcare environments. This will have a significant impact on health professional knowledge as it will lead to multiple inter-professional sustainable healthcare-related activities across health and academic institutions around the world.

Outcome: As a result of this work, in 2022, RCSI became the first institution in the Republic of Ireland to be awarded Beacon Status in recognition of its commitment to sustainable healthcare, and in 2023 and 2024, RCSI topped the Planetary Health Report Card evaluation. This evaluation is part of a global student-led initiative which assesses the extent to which higher education institutions across the globe are promoting and supporting planetary health. In a student-led evaluation, RCSI and other participating institutions were assessed and graded across five key indicators: planetary health curriculum, interdisciplinary research in health and the environment, community outreach and advocacy, support for student-led initiatives, and campus sustainability. RCSI's performance across all categories resulted in an overall grade of A- the highest in Ireland.

Through embedding reflective practice and group work early in the student journey, and on to professional development, these initiatives will have a local, national and global impact as graduates and CPD participants will go on to advocate for change, and how to overcome barriers to sustainable healthcare.

In addition, over the last two years, RCSI set up a Sustainability and Climate Health committee, which is sponsored by a Senior Management Team Lead for Sustainability, the Director of International Engagement and External Relations. The committee has several working groups, one of which is the education working group chaired by the Head of the Department of Public Health and Epidemiology. RCSI's long-term aim, through this stakeholder working group, is to continue to evolve and enhance the delivery of sustainable healthcare teaching across all undergraduate, postgraduate and professional training courses – to build a lifelong learning focus on sustainable healthcare within the institution.

RCSI ranked fifth in the world for SDG3 'Good Health and Wellbeing' in the Times Higher Education (THE) University Impact Rankings 2024. This is the fourth time in five years that RCSI has ranked in the top five of this global ranking.

CASE STUDY 16

Title: Conducting end of semester surveys in the classroom

Keywords: Surveys, Response Rates, Student Engagement

Introduction: Between 2020 and 2022 there was a significant decrease in student survey response rates. Therefore, in 2023, the RCSI Quality Enhancement Office (QEO) undertook an evaluation of activities to increase student engagement in surveys. This resulted in a proposal that the QEO, with support from academic staff, pilot the conducting the end of semester student surveys during scheduled in-person sessions. Conducting surveys in the classroom is an attempt to combat the ongoing survey fatigue among students and increase engagement in student feedback.

Initiative: The QEOs in RCSI Dublin and Bahrain undertook to support in-class survey sessions. This included providing a pre-survey presentation on the importance of student feedback and how to provide effective feedback. Students were invited via email and completed the survey on their laptops or phones during the session. In most cases, survey response rates increased significantly, achieving as much as 51% in Semester 1 and up to 80% in Semester 2, compared to an average of 25% for email-only surveys.

At the RCSI Quality Committee, a question was raised about the quality of responses from in-class surveys e.g. would additional respondents see this as a box-ticking exercise. Therefore, further analysis was completed to compare two surveys conducted with the same cohort of students at different times, using different methods (in class vs. email only). Some survey quality indicators, such as completion rates and the coverage of students' demographics, were compared between the two surveys.

Both surveys were conducted with the same cohort of 35 students, the response rate to the Semester 1 survey conducted via email was 43% (N=15) whereas the in-class survey in Semester 2 was completed by 86% of the class (N=29). This means that the response rate doubled when the survey was brought into classroom. Surveys taken in class were more complete and students were less likely to skip survey questions, out of all response opportunities, the in-class survey had 75% non-blank responses to a longer survey instrument (54 questions) whereas the email survey was shorter (43 questions) and resulted in 71% non-blank responses. With the same number of free-text questions in each survey, a greater proportion of comments were completed for the in-class survey (67%) compared to the email survey (52%). The length of comments was comparable with a mean number of words of 42.1 (email) and 42.9 (in person) and a median of 22 (email) and 31.5 (in person).

Conducting surveys in class is an opportunity to reach out to students who might be less engaged with self-directed opportunities such as surveys sent via email. While the class size was small, results seem to indicate that conducting surveys in the classroom supports a better coverage of some student demographics, such as gender and international student status. These preliminary results indicate that in-class surveys could assist with achieving a better representation of some student demographics. In general, the quality of responses to surveys conducted during a teaching session was not different to surveys distributed via email. Results indicate that students tend to answer more questions and are open to longer surveys. By improving the overall response rates, in class surveys enable a broader coverage of different demographics.

Outcome: In class surveys present many benefits. Having dedicated time to complete a survey in the classroom highlights the importance of collecting student feedback as an integrated part of the learning process. As mentioned above, it engages those who do not respond to emails. The pre-survey presentation is an opportunity to preview the survey content, educate students on how to give effective feedback and close the feedback loop by providing examples of actions taken in response to feedback. Students also have an opportunity to ask questions while completing the survey.

The timing of the survey is an important consideration, for example surveys completed during breaks in the timetable and sessions just before lunchtime were not very successful and well attended by students. Additionally, sessions led by academic staff (known to students) seem to have a greater impact, compared to those led solely by QEO staff.

Following a successful pilot, the QEO (with the support of academic colleagues) is progressing with a broader implementation of the in-class approach, with more cohorts and programmes being added in the academic year 2024-25. Some challenges are yet to be overcome, for example it is difficult to replicate this practice for students on placement and those attending online programmes.

CASE STUDY 17

Title: A Joint Quality Review of RUMC (RSCI & UCD Malaysia Campus)

Keywords: Transnational, quality review, collaboration

Introduction: RUMC (RCSI & UCD Malaysia Campus) was established in 1996 as a joint venture between the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) and University College Dublin (UCD). It is the only Irish Foreign University Branch Campus in Malaysia. In compliance with statutory requirements, both universities conduct quality reviews of their home and overseas campuses. To streamline the process, it was decided to conduct a joint quality review. However, the quality frameworks of each university are necessarily different, to support the context in which they operate. This review needed to satisfy the requirements of both Higher Education Institutions without becoming overly convoluted or burdensome for participants.

Initiative: The Quality Office Teams in both RCSI and UCD agreed to collaborate to develop a process that met the requirements of both institutions, supported RUMC staff and the Review Team, and enabled a culture of quality enhancement. Building on the process used in a 2014 joint review, while accounting for evolution in quality & both HEIs, the quality teams in RCSI and UCD, in consultation with RUMC,

developed joint terms of reference. This framework for collaboration was subsequently approved by governance committees at both institutions. Regular planning meetings were held to agree timelines, budgets, cost-sharing, panel composition, guidelines, supports and templates. This included a joint approach to selecting and briefing the RUMC & Review Teams.

Key to the success of the Review was the engagement of leadership in RUMC, RCSI and UCD. Other factors included close engagement between both quality offices, regular communication, flexibility, & respect for each institution's requirements, time and expertise. Unforeseen queries & disparities between requirements occasionally arose during the review. Delays also arose due to the requirements to jointly agree all aspects of the review. However, a solution-focused, connected approach was key to finding common ground.

The quality heads of both institutions attended RUMC to oversee the process & address queries. The RCSI Quality Reviews Manager acted as rapporteur to the Review Team, ensuring that experienced support was available. This presence in Malaysia also served to further enhance the working relationships between the Quality Teams in RUMC, RCSI and UCD. Following the review visit, ongoing collaboration between quality offices was required to draft, develop and approve the resultant quality improvement plan.

Outcome

The resulting review report provided a comprehensive review of RUMC's provision within the three missions of higher education. Success factors identified by the Review Team Chair, included the composition of the review team, regular check-ins with the heads of the quality functions in both institutions and a schedule that supported engagement, reflection and triangulation. The response to the report from RUMC outlined how the institution looked forward to implementing the review findings and were confident that they will contribute to the continued success and sustainability of RUMC.