Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland

Annual Institutional Quality Assurance Report 2019

Based on the reporting period 1 September 2017 – 31 August 2018

The Cyclical Review Process

Part 1

Overview of internal QA governance, policies and procedures

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Quality Committee and its executive function, the Quality Enhancement Office (QEO), were established also in 2010. The Quality Committee is chaired by the Chief Executive Officer of RCSI and reports both to MHSB and to SPFB. It is responsible for the creation of policy and for the

implementation of quality processes and Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement activities across academic, professional and administrative areas of all RCSI campuses. The role of the QEO is to support the implementation of the RCSI quality policy by coordinating all relevant activities and by collecting the data needed to allow the Quality Committee to quality assure all aspects of programme delivery. The QEO currently has a staff complement of four and is located in the historic RCSI building on St. Stephen's Green (Dublin 2).

The QEO manages four parallel cycles of quality reviews:
- Internal Quality Assurance (QA) Reviews of Schools within the Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences;
- Internal QA Reviews of Postgraduate/Professional Faculties;
- Internal QA Reviews of Administrative and Support Units;
- Internal QA Reviews of overseas Branch Campuses and Programmes.

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

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

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

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

RCSI internal governance structures relevant to quality

Confirmation of QA Policy and Procedures

1. Programme Design and Approval (ESG 1.2)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance policy and procedures for the design and approval of new programmes.

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

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

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

[N.B. Schedule 3 (9) of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 introduced Section 47A to the Universities Act 1997 which provides that the degrees & qualifications of RCSI shall be degrees & qualifications of the NUI where they are approved by the NUI and while RCSI remains a recognised college of the NUI. Accordingly degrees of RCSI are awards of the NUI, with the sole exception of the degree of Doctor of Science (DSc) *honoris causa* which is awarded twice annually and is solely and exclusively a degree of RCSI. In consequence, the procedure for programme design and approval is designed to meet the requirements of both RCSI & NUI.]

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

2. Programme Delivery and Assessment (ESG 1.3)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance policies and procedures for the ongoing delivery and assessment of programmes.

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

3. Research Quality (ESG 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.9)
Links and/or text relating to any specific quality assurance procedures for the design, approval, delivery, assessment and monitoring of research programmes, if they exist.

RCSI has a comprehensive suite of policies and procedures governing research activity and its quality assurance developed by the Office of Research & Innovation (ORI) and the School of Postgraduate Studies (SPGS). The policies and procedures developed and implemented by the ORI cover all aspects of research practice including research ethics, the acquisition and management of funding, publication policy, bibliometric indices, etc.; these are contained in the 'Researchers' Handbook', a comprehensive document issued to all research personnel. All of these policies are subject to regular review and updating as required. These documents are disseminated to students and staff via the Moodle virtual learning environment, but they are not published on the public-facing RCSI web-site.

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

The RCSI Research Ethics Committee (REC) acts to ensure the highest standards of conduct in research at RCSI and to support staff in pursuing this goal. It does this [a] by evaluating ethical considerations of all research projects involving human or animal participants, and conducted by or through members of staff, which are not evaluated by other similar committees; and [b] by fulfilling an educational and advisory role regarding ethical aspects of research in order to promote best practice in research conducted throughout RCSI:
http://www.rcsi.ie/Research_Ethics

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

4. Student Lifecycle (ESG 1.4)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures that are encompassed by the student lifecycle.

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

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

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

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

Progression is determined by 'Marks and Standards' documents which are created and published for each year of each programme. These documents outline the standards and criteria which must be satisfied in order to progress to the next stage of the programme. These are made available to students via the virtual learning environment. There are also policies on the relevant appeals processes. Monitoring of progression rates for students in the first year of undergraduate programmes is routinely done by the Admissions Office. Progression rates of other years are monitored by the Student, Academic & Regulatory Affairs office (SARA; registry) and by Cycle / Programme Committees. Graduation rates for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes are included in a suite of internal metrics that is reported annually.

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

Students' grades are delivered to them directly, and on a confidential basis, electronically (via Moodle or email) as soon as is practicable following the relevant Examinations Board meeting. At the end of each academic year, students are sent a Transcript of their results. These transcripts provide a full breakdown of all major summative and professional examinations taken by that student that year.

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

http://www.rcsi.ie/comppas

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

5. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring the competence of teaching staff, including staff recruitment and staff development.

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

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

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

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

6. Teaching and Learning (ESG 1.4, 1.5, 1.6)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring the quality of teaching and learning.

The primary method of monitoring the quality of teaching and learning is via the student feedback surveys run by the Quality Enhancement Office. RCSI survey policy is to apply a centralised core and options model of evaluation across all undergraduate courses and campuses. The use of 'core' questions allows the direct comparison of student experience between instances of the same programme on different sites, between programmes and over time. The use of 'optional' questions allows for the specific/targeted collection of information, e.g. students' reaction to a new teaching intervention. The central role played by the QEO ensures that the data is collected, processed and reported in a consistent way.

The QEO provides feedback reports for each year of each programme twice a year (at the end of each semester) or once a year (at the end of semester 2), determined by whether or not the content is delivered by discrete semesters. Cycle/Programme Directors use this information in conjunction with academic performance data to determine what (if any) changes need to be made for the subsequent year. This information should be communicated back to the students by the Schools at the start of the next academic year in the form of a Quality Improvement Plan either verbally (during one of the first lectures of the year) or via Moodle. The quantitative survey response data are made available directly to students via the Moodle virtual learning environment shortly after the data have been processed.

Externally, feedback on student engagement is collected independently from first and final year undergraduate students via the 'Irish Survey of Student Engagement' (ISSE). This nationwide survey aims to measure student engagement in all participating third level institutions and allows individual institutions to benchmark against the rest of the sector. This process is facilitated and reported by the Quality Enhancement Office. In Q1 of 2018, RCSI also participated in the pilot implementation of the ISSE survey targeting postgraduate research students (ISSE-PGR).

7. Resources and Support (ESG 1.5)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring funding and resources for learning, teaching and research. Also, links and or text relating to the quality assurance procedures for learning resources and student support.

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

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

Subsequent to the completion in 2017 of No. 26 York Street, a new state-of-the-art facility over 10 floors on the city-centre campus, RCSI has completed Phase 2 of the Education and Research Centre on the Beaumont Hospital campus. ERC Phase 2 provides an additional 30,000 sq. ft. of space incorporating a new student concourse at ground floor level to link the new facility with the existing building. The new structure includes a series of flexible multi-functional tutorial rooms, open-plan faculty offices and meeting spaces on the first floor, with laboratory and research facilities on the second floor.

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

Student Support Services

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

Comprehensive information and related polices on all supports and services are available to students on Moodle whilst the RCSI website hosts information under the 'Study with Us' pages and 'Student Life' pages. In addition, students are informed of supports and services during their orientation and through ongoing workshops and seminars throughout their studies: http://www.rcsi.ie/studentservices; http://www.rcsi.ie/study

8. Information Management (ESG 1.7)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for collecting, analysing and using relevant information about programmes and other activities.

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

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

Profile of student population:
RCSI routinely collects information about the student population for RCSI-Dublin and the overseas provisions i.e. RCSI-Bahrain, RCSI-Dubai, Penang Medical College, PU-RCSI. Student profile information is collected through Student, Academic & Regulatory Affairs (SARA) Office.

Student Feedback:
The collection, analysis and dissemination of student feedback in RCSI is managed by the Quality Enhancement Office (QEO). All undergraduate students from the School of Medicine, School of Pharmacy and School of Physiotherapy, and taught postgraduate students are given an opportunity to give feedback about modules completed in each semester. The data collection tools are based around a 'core & options' model. All surveys contain a series of core items relating to the headings of Modules, Assessments, Skills & Staff. Surveys are developed in collaboration with Cycle Directors and other Faculty staff who have an opportunity to suggest additional survey items if required. The Students' Union also has an input to the process. The QEO conducts an in-depth analysis of both quantitative and qualitative feedback with an aim to inform and enhance the delivery of RCSI programmes. Detailed reports that contain both quantitative and qualitative survey responses are circulated to Cycle Directors who can share the findings with their teaching staff. This gives module coordinators and facilitators an opportunity to identify areas for improvement. In order to close the feedback loop, quantitative reports (without open ended comments) are routinely made available to students via the Moodle virtual learning environment.

Student progression rates:
Student progression rates are an important indicator of academic quality. RCSI puts a priority on the analysis of performance of first year students and therefore collects and analyses student exam performance for Foundation Year and Junior Cycle of the medical programme; i.e. the first year exam performance. Data collection and analysis lies within the remit of the RCSI Admissions Office. An analysis is undertaken for the first sitting and repeat exam performance. Given that RCSI recruits students from multiple countries and academic backgrounds, it is a priority to analyse and compare the performance of different student cohort groups by entry exam (A level, IB, IMCP, etc.) and nationality. This information is then used to assess the suitability of minimum

academic entry requirements and to inform decisions on student recruitment. Progression reports are also shared with the relevant Cycle Directors to inform decision making.

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

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

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

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

9. Self-evaluation and Monitoring (ESG 1.9)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for self-evaluation and internal monitoring.

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

Programmatic Reviews:
All matters related to Programmatic Reviews in RCSI are managed by the Awards and Qualification Committee (A&QC). The A&QC oversees a rolling cycle of Programmatic Reviews of all RCSI programmes which offer qualifications or awards on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and which fall under the governance of the Medicine and Health Science Board. The first cycle of programmatic reviews commenced in 2014 and to-date four programmatic reviews have been completed: MSc in Healthcare Ethics & Law, MSc in Healthcare Management, Doctor of Medicine (MD) and Masters degree in Surgery (MCh) programmes. Programmatic Reviews follow a process consisting of the following steps: preparation of a Self-evaluation Report, submission of a Business Case Report to the Business Case Panel, a two-day site-visit facilitated by a three-person (two external and one internal panel members), submission of a review report, and presentation of the report to the Medicine & Health Science Board. The outcomes of the Programmatic Review process may be:
[a] Full Confidence with revalidation for a period of five years;
[b] Limited Confidence with quality improvement planning and follow-up; or
[c] No Confidence with consequent discontinuation of the degree programme.

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

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

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

Additionally, the QEO administers thematic and bespoke reviews as directed by the Quality Committee, MHSB and SPFB. In common with similar processes in the Irish higher education sector,

these reviews consist of three phases: self-assessment and the production of a Self-Assessment Report by the unit under review, validation of the self-assessment by a Peer Review Group which undertakes a 2-3 day site-visit and produces a Peer Review Group Report and, finally, the production and implementation of a Quality Improvement Plan by the unit. Peer Review Group Reports and their corresponding Quality Improvement Plans are published by RCSI:
http://www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews

Use of metrics:
In order to support the self-evaluation and monitoring processes RCSI routinely collects and generates statistical data for monitoring and self-evaluation. Examination results are monitored by examination boards to monitor student performance and ensure accuracy and integrity of the examination process. RCSI also collects and analyses institutional metrics on student and staff, student engagement & satisfaction, expenditure on teaching & research, research, regional engagement, knowledge transfer and international focus.

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

10. Stakeholder Engagement (ESG 1.1)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for the involvement of external stakeholders in quality assurance.

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

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

In terms of students as stakeholders, the primary method of engagement in terms of quality assurance is via the student feedback process as described above. RCSI also engages with staff as stakeholders through periodic Staff Surveys; these are administered and processed by the QEO in the same way as the student surveys. Where input from other external stakeholders is required, for example as part of the internal reviews of academic and service units, this process is facilitated by the QEO in terms of targeted surveys and occasionally formal or informal focus groups.

11. Engagement with Other Bodies (ESG 1.1)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for engagement with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies and other quality assurance and awarding bodies (details of specific engagements should be provided in the online section of the form).

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

12. Provision and Use of Public Information (ESG 1.8)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for the provision of clear, accurate, up-to date and accessible public information.

Publication of Quality Assurance documents:
RCSI is committed to robust, transparent processes and procedures for ongoing quality assurance and quality enhancement of academic programmes, Schools, Faculties and Support Units both in Ireland and overseas. In keeping with this, RCSI publishes all Peer Review Group reports and Quality Improvement Plans arising from internal quality reviews:
www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews
However, RCSI does not publish self-assessment reports or output reports and QIPs of programmatic reviews. Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement (QA/QI) documentation including internal review guidelines and templates for Academic Units and Service Units, guidelines and report templates for Peer Review Groups and guidelines and templates for Quality Improvement Plans are publically available on the RCSI website.   In addition the RCSI Quality Policy, the Quality Committee Terms of Reference, Quality Enhancement Office Terms of Reference and Calendar of Reviews are publically available on the RCSI website:
RCSI Quality Enhancement Office Terms of Reference
RCSI Calendar of Reviews

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

13. Linked Providers (for Designated Awarding Bodies) (ESG 1.1)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for assuring engagement with linked providers including the procedures for approval, monitoring, review, withdrawal of approval and appeal for linked providers.

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

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

Not applicable.

15. Collaborative Provision (ESG 1.1)
Links and/or text relating to the institution-wide quality assurance procedures for engagement with third parties for the provision of programmes.

RCSI does not have a formal policy for Collaborative (or Transnational) Provision currently. However, RCSI activities in this area are informed by and conform to the IHEQN Guidelines for the Approval, Monitoring and Review of Collaborative and Transnational Provision (2013) – the RCSI Director of Quality Enhancement was a member of the IHEQN working party which produced these guidelines.

16. Additional Notes   23
Any additional notes can be entered here.

> **17. Internal Review Schedule**
> The internal reviews schedule or cycle at the level of unit of review within the institution. The units of review can be: module; programme; department/school; service delivery unit; faculty. The cycle will usually run over a 5-7 year period and all units should be encompassed over the full period of the cycle.

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

Year	2018/19
Areas/Units	School of Postgraduate Studies; School of Nursing & Midwifery; Department of Surgical Affairs; Conference & Events Office; Communications Department
Number	5
Link(s) to Publications	http://www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews

Year	2019/20
Areas/Units	Institutional Review of RCSI-Dubai; Faculty of Sports & Exercise Medicine; Student, Academic & Regulatory Affairs Office (Registry); Student Services Office; Alumni & Development Office; Information Technology Department
Number	6
Link(s) to Publications	http://www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews

Year	2020/21
Areas/Units	School of Physiotherapy; Institute of Leadership; Faculty of Radiologists; RCSI Libraries; Human Resources Department; Perdana University-RCSI School of Medicine
Number	6
Link(s) to Publications	http://www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews

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

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

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

Overview of internal QA governance, policies and procedures	AIQR_Part_1_RCSI_2019_Final.docx
PRSBs	4
Awarding Bodies	1
QA Bodies	5
Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	First Set of Records
Type of Arrangement	Awarding Body
Name of the Body	National University of Ireland
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	RCSI's degree awarding powers (enacted in 2010) were recognised in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, and RCSI was identified as a 'Designated Awarding Body'. Schedule 3 (9) of the Qualifications & Quality Assurance (Education & Training) Act 2012 introduced Section 47A to the Universities Act 1997 which provides that the degrees & qualifications of RCSI shall be degrees & qualifications of the NUI where they are approved by the NUI and while RCSI remains a recognized college of the NUI. Accordingly degrees of RCSI are awards of the NUI, with the sole exception of the degree of Doctor of Science (DSc) honoris causa which is awarded twice annually and which is solely and exclusively a degree of RCSI.
Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	Second Set of Records
Type of Arrangement	PRSB
Name of the Body	Medical Council of Ireland
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Bachelors Degrees in Medicine, Surgery & Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO]
Date of last review or accreditation	09-11-2011

Next review year	2019
Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	Third Set of Records
Type of Arrangement	PRSB
Name of the Body	Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Masters Degree in Pharmacy (M. Pharm)
Date of last review or accreditation	24-01-2017
Next review year	2019
Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	Fourth Set of Records
Type of Arrangement	PRSB
Name of the Body	Health & Social Care Professionals Council (CORU) Physiotherapists Registration Board
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Bachelors Degree in Physiotherapy
Date of last review or accreditation	13-09-2016
Next review year	2022
Section: Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	Fifth Set of Records
Name of the Body	Malaysian Medical Council
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Perdana University-RCSI School of Medicine (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia); Bachelors Degrees in Medicine, Surgery & Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO] RCSI-UCD Malaysia Campus (Penang, Malaysia) – formerly Penang Medical College; Bachelors Degrees in Medicine, Surgery & Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO]
Date of last review or accreditation	24-09-2018
Next review year	2023
Joint research degrees	0

Joint/double/multiple awards	1
Collaborative programmes	4
Franchise programmes	1
Linked providers (DABs only)	0
Section: Collaborative Provision	First Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Franchise programmes
Name of the Body (Bodies)	Perdana University – RCSI School of Medicine (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Bachelors Degrees in Medicine, Surgery & Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO]
Date of last review	19-10-2015
Next review year	2020
Section: Collaborative Provision	Second Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Collaborative programmes
Name of the Body (Bodies)	RCSI-UCD Malaysia Campus (Penang, Malaysia) – formerly Penang Medical College - & University College Dublin
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Bachelors Degrees in Medicine, Surgery & Obstetrics [MB, BCh, BAO]
Date of last review	02-05-2014
Next review year	2021
Section: Collaborative Provision	Third Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Collaborative programmes
Name of the Body (Bodies)	Institute of Technology Tralee
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	NUI Certificate in Biomedical Sciences
Date of last review	01-04-2012
Section: Collaborative Provision	Fourth Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Collaborative programmes
Name of the Body (Bodies)	University of Malawi College of Medicine (Blantyre, Malawi)

Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Masters Degree in Community Systems Health Research
Date of last review	01-04-2014
Section: Collaborative Provision	Fifth Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Collaborative programmes
Name of the Body (Bodies)	University of Sharjah (United Arab Emirates)
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Masters Degree in Leadership in Health Professions Education
Date of last review	01-07-2013
Section: Collaborative Provision	Sixth Set of Records
Type of arrangement:	Joint/double/multiple awards
Name of the Body (Bodies)	Dublin City University & Maynooth University (3U Partnership)
Programme Titles and Links to Publications	Masters Degree in Engineering in Healthcare Technologies
Date of last review	01-04-2013
Do you wish to make a final submission?	Yes, this is my final submission
On behalf of the President/Provost/CEO I confirm that the information submitted in this AIQR is accurate and correct.	Confirmed
Overview of internal governance, policies and procedures (Word Template).	Confirmed
Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies.	Confirmed
Collaborative Provision.	Confirmed
Articulation Agreements.	Confirmed
Date of Final Submission	19-02-2019

Parts 2-6

Institution-led QA – Annual Information

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

Part 2: Institution-led QA – Annual

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

Section 1: Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Developments

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

RCSI launched its new Strategic Plan 2018-2022 'Transforming Healthcare Education, Research and Service' during the reporting period. The development of the plan was informed by a process of consultation, data gathering and analysis undertaken by the Senior Management Team over a 12-18 month period. As part of this process, a thematic review of implementation of the previous Strategic Plan (2013-2017) was undertaken by an international review panel which assessed the impact of the plan and identified factors that influenced the implementation of its elements. This review identified a series of key recommendations which informed the development of the new plan. The Strategic Plan 2018-2022 'Transforming Healthcare Education, Research and Service' identifies Quality as one of the three foundations for, and measures of, successful delivery of the Plan's provisions (together with Reputation and Equality, Diversity & Inclusion). http://www.rcsi.ie/files/about-us/20180406042156_RCSI_Strategic_Plan_2018_2022..pdf

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

[i] QA reviews of Schools within the Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences
Units in scope = 6; the first cycle of these reviews was completed in 2016-2017; the second cycle commenced in 2017-2018

[ii] QA reviews of Administrative & Service Units
Units in scope = 13; first cycle status = 10/13 complete (77%) in 2017-2018

[iii] QA reviews of Overseas Branch Campuses & Programmes
Units in scope = 4; the first cycle of these reviews was completed in 2017-2018; the second cycle will commence in 2018-2019

[iv] QA reviews of Postgraduate/Professional Faculties
Units in scope = 6; first cycle status = 1/6 complete (17%) in 2017-2018

RCSI launched the Transforming Healthcare Education Project (THEP), an initiative to redesign all undergraduate curricula in the health sciences (Pharmacy, Physiotherapy & Medicine) to ensure that graduates are prepared to excel in the rapidly evolving international healthcare environment. As a focus for this redesign, RCSI has adopted the CanMEDS competency framework to inform the development of revised Graduate Profiles as the highest-level programme curriculum outcomes. This framework, adopted with the permission of the Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Canada, incorporates seven key roles of healthcare practitioners: Communicator, Collaborator, Leader, Health Advocate, Scholar, Professional and Expert (this last role integrating the other six). Focusing initially on the undergraduate Medicine curriculum, the THEP project team is working with faculty to carry out a fundamental redesign of the curriculum incorporating greater use of case-based and small-group teaching, simulation-based skills training, technology enhanced learning and individualized feedback on academic & clinical performance.

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

Changes to the Reviews Calendar
As noted previously, the range of accreditation activity carried out by the Postgraduate Regulatory Statutory Bodies (both in Ireland & overseas) in parallel to internal QA reviews can lead to pressure to change the Reviews Calendar. Other competing pressures can impact on reviews of Administrative and Service Units. Planning had commenced during the previous reporting period for a number of reviews due to take place in the current reporting period. Following representations to RCSI Senior Management and to the Quality Committee by the relevant Units Heads, these reviews were modified or deferred.

[a] Internal QA Review of the Alumni & Development Office
This was deferred by a further 12 months

[b] Internal QA Review of the Finance Department
Under the current RCSI governance provisions, the Finance Committee of RCSI Council has oversight of all financial matters. The Finance Committee commissioned Price Waterhouse Cooper (PWC) to carry out a review of the Finance Department, which was scheduled to undergo internal QA review during the reporting period. In consultation with RCSI Senior Management, the Quality Committee agreed (in this instance) to adopt a hybrid approach to the review whereby the PWC process was allowed to substitute for the Self Assessment and Peer Review Group site-visit phases of the process, and the Finance Department then produced a Quality Improvement Plan in response to the PWC recommendations which was reviewed and approved by the Quality Committee.

[c] Internal QA Review of the Department of Surgical Affairs (Postgraduate Faculty)
The review ran more or less as scheduled though the Peer Review Group site-visit was unavoidably postponed by several months and took place in October 2018.

Planning for the second Cycle of reviews of Overseas Branch Campuses & Programmes
RCSI-Dubai was not included in the first Cycle of reviews of Overseas Branch Campuses & Programmes which commenced in 2011-2012 on the basis that, at the time, RCSI-Dubai was a new campus running only programmes offered by the Institute of Leadership. Instead, RCSI-Dubai was included in the internal QA review of the Institute of Leadership which took place in 2012-2013. Since then, RCSI-Dubai has grown considerably. Planning for the second cycle of these reviews commenced during this reporting period and, in consultation with the Institute of Leadership, the Quality Committee decided that RCSI-Dubai will be included in the cycle. The internal institutional review of RCSI-Dubai will take place in 2019.

Revision & review of programme governance documents
During the reporting period, the Academic Council and the Medicine & Health Sciences Board reviewed and approved a wide range of revised/updated governance documents for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, including Marks & Standards, progression regulations, etc. Of particular note was the approval of regulations governing a new submission route for PhD candidates, that of 'PhD by publication'.

Changes to the text of AIQR Part 1 for the reporting period
The text of AIQR Part 1 has been updated and the URLs refreshed.

1.3 The schedule of QA governance meetings.

In the period from September 2017 to August 2018, the following meetings of the relevant governance committees & boards took place:

RCSI Quality Committee
27 September 2017; 31 January 2018; 21 March 2018; 23 May 2018
Four meetings

Academic Council
13 September 2017; 11 October 2017; 8 November 2017; 13 December 2017; 10 January 2018; 14 February 2018; 7 March 2018; 11 April 2018; 16 May 2018; 13 June 2018
Ten meetings

Medicine & Health Sciences Board
28 September 2017; 30 November 2017; 15 February 2018; 22 March 2018; 31 May 2018
Five meetings

Surgery & Postgraduate Faculties Board
26 October 2017; 22 February 2018; 26 April 2018
Three meetings

Section 2: Reviews in the reporting period

2.1 Internal reviews that were completed in the reporting period.

Four internal reviews were completed during the reporting period:

[1] Institutional review of RCSI-Bahrain

[2] Internal QA review of the Admissions Department

[3] Internal QA review of the Conference& Events Department

[4] 'Hybrid' internal QA review of the Finance Department

Peer Review Group reports and corresponding Quality Improvement Plans are published at: http://www.rcsi.ie/Internal-quality-reviews

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

Number of new **Programme Validations/Programme Approvals** completed in the reporting year	6
Number of **Programme Reviews** completed in the reporting year	1
Number of **Research Reviews** completed in the reporting year	0
Number of **School/Department/Faculty Reviews** completed in the reporting year	0
Number of **Service Unit Reviews** completed in the reporting year	3
Number of **Reviews of Arrangements with partner organisations** completed in the reporting year	1

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

Composition of Panels	%
Internal	22
National	50
UK	28
EU	17
Student	6
Other	6

Chair Profile	%
Internal	0
Similar Institution	75
Different Institution	25
International	50

Section 3: Other Implementation Factors

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

Central to the development of the new RCSI Strategic Plan 2018-2022 'Transforming Healthcare Education, Research and Service' was the definition of groups of individual projects under each of the three main strategic pillars:

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

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

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

Survey data collection in RCSI (both in Ireland and overseas) is centralised and managed by the Quality Enhancement Office (QEO). Feedback from undergraduate students is collected twice a year at the end of each Semester, whereas postgraduate students are typically surveyed either once a year or on a modular basis. Quantitative and qualitative analyses of results are reported to Cycle or Programme Directors who disseminate the findings to their staff and are also responsible for closing the feedback loop with students. Quantitative analyses of survey data are made available routinely to students via the Moodle virtual learning environment. During this reporting period, the QEO conducted over 200 surveys with response rates ranging from above 50% (end-of-semester student feedback surveys) to approximately 30% for other surveys. In addition to surveys of students in degree-awarding programmes, the QEO manages feedback processes for professional trainees under the auspices of the National Surgical Training Programme, the Irish Institute of Pharmacy and the Affiliation for Pharmacy Practice Experiential Learning (APPEL), which manages student placements in the five-year integrated Masters in Pharmacy (M.Pharm.) programmes offered by the three Irish Schools of Pharmacy.

Externally, feedback on student engagement is collected independently from first and final year undergraduate students by the national 'Irish Survey of Student Engagement' (ISSE). This process is facilitated and reported by the Quality Enhancement Office. The QEO also produces an annual benchmarking analysis which compares RCSI institution-specific ISSE data with the overall ISSE data and with data from internal surveys of student satisfaction and engagement; this analysis is presented to RCSI Senior Management. In Q1 of 2018, RCSI also participated in the pilot implementation of the ISSE survey targeting postgraduate research students (ISSE-PGR).

The Quality Committee and QEO continue to emphasise the importance of 'closing the feedback loop' with students following surveys, so that students can be assured that their opinions are valued and responded to. A number of units implement 'you said, we did' campaigns to publicise their responses to student feedback, in parallel with regular feedback sessions to classes and to class representatives. Discussions commenced during the reporting period with the aim of including 'closing the feedback loop' in the annual business planning process for Schools.

In addition to routine end of semester feedback surveys, the QEO collected data during the reporting period for a number of internal initiatives including:
- Ongoing research into mental health and resilience among healthcare students
- Attitudes and behaviours of senior medical students in a multicultural environment
- Equality, diversity & inclusion (EDI) surveys of staff and students as part of the evidence-base for RCSI's application for an Athena-SWAN Bronze Award which was submitted during the reporting period

The management of academic programmes is informed by a range of data including:
- Student feedback via end-of-module or -semester surveys
- 'In-course' examination results
- Academic progression & attrition data
- 'Exit' (final) examination results
- External Examiners' reports
- Reports from periodic accreditation processes carried out by the relevant Postgraduate Regulatory Statutory Bodies (PRSBs)
- Reports from periodic Programmatic Reviews

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

The Quality Enhancement Office manages survey data collection in RCSI centrally and has been successful in maintaining substantial response rates. The priority of the QEO in relation to surveys is to manage the overall number of surveys to which the students are exposed to avoid falling response rates due to 'survey fatigue'. To this end, the QEO works closely with the RCSI Research Ethics Committee and other stakeholders to manage survey demand. However, this is proving to be increasingly difficult.

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

3.3 A description of other implementation issues.

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

Part 3: Effectiveness and Impact

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

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

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

A longitudinal analysis of Peer Review Group reports, their commendations and recommendations, arising from internal QA reviews in the period 2011 – 2016 was carried out during the previous reporting period. The most commonly occurring themes among PRG recommendations were in the areas of Staff Development; Unit Operations; Strategic Planning; Student Records Management System & Registry function; and Organisational Structure & Governance. It is encouraging that the broad themes identified correspond to priority areas and actions identified in the RCSI Strategic Plans.

Feedback from units following internal QA review confirms that the process is constructive, validating their own self-assessment, and enabling significant development through implementation of their Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs). Two elements of the internal QA review process assist significantly in realising the actions contained in each QIP. These are [a] the agreement of the QIP between the unit under review and the Senior Management Team (including the allocation of resources, if required, through the annual Business Planning process); and [b] the mid-cycle review of QIP implementation carried out by the Medicine & Health Sciences Board. Feedback gathered from members of Peer Review Groups conducting reviews is also positive.

The Quality Enhancement Office was itself subject to internal QA review in 2015 and, as part of the self-assessment process, carried out anonymised surveys of the staff of units which had undergone review prior to 2015, and of Peer Review Group members. Similar surveys are planned in advance of the next scheduled internal QA review of the Quality Enhancement Office (2021-2022).

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

The Quality Enhancement Office regularly carries out longitudinal analyses of student satisfaction indices to identify major themes and time trends. This data, together with recommendations arising from the thematic review of implementation of the RCSI Strategic Plan 2013-2017, fed substantially into the development of the 'Transformative Learning Experience' pillar of the new Strategic Plan 2018-2022 'Transforming Healthcare Education, Research and Service' during the reporting period.

As noted in the last AIQR submission, the longitudinal analysis of Peer Review Group reports (2011 – 2016) identified a time sequence of recommendations and commendations which reflect the journey that RCSI has made towards maturity as a university-level health sciences higher education institution, in particular relating to the implementation of recommendations to develop internal management structures to support unit Heads. It is notable that a number of the units which have been subject to internal QA review have created internal posts whose focus is on quality assurance.

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

Peer Review Groups commented on the degree to which staff of units undergoing review are aware of the RCSI strategic plan and priorities, and working to align the activities of their units to them.

Peer Review Groups also commented consistently on the initiative and dedication of the staff of the units under review, noting their commitment to providing excellent service to their students and other stakeholders and their ability to provide a range of services despite, in some cases, a relatively limited staff complement.

A key theme was the importance for all units to develop strategic plans which are aligned with the overall institutional strategy.

Another recurrent theme was the need to conduct period skills training needs analyses which feed into long-term personal development planning for unit staff.

Part 4: Quality Enhancement

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

4.1 Improvements and Enhancements for the Reporting Period
Improvements or enhancements, impacting on quality or quality assurance, that took place in the reporting period.

A consolidated focus on professionalism in healthcare
As part of the mission of RCSI – to educate, nurture and discover for the benefit of human health – our education and professional training programmes have a characteristic focus on professional responsibility towards patients, colleagues and society and on professional behaviour. A number of initiatives have been implemented to consolidate this focus:
[i] Professor Dubhfeasa Slattery was appointed to the RCSI – Bons Secours Chair in Medical Professionalism (the first such post in Ireland)
[ii] Formal definitions of professionalism have been adopted by the Schools of Pharmacy, Physiotherapy and Medicine which will inform curriculum development at a fundamental level
[iii] A Code of Practice for Surgeons was launched which aims to support surgeons in their clinical practice by providing a set of principles that they can use to inform their own practice, and guidance on what surgeons can do when they feel that their ability to meet their professional responsibilities is compromised:
http://www.rcsi.ie/files/surgery/docs/20180212115142_Code%20of%20Practice%20for%20Surgeons%20.pdf
[iv] The inaugural annual national conference on Professionalism in Healthcare, entitled 'Professionalism: why it matters for Patient Safety, Quality & Risk', took place at RCSI in April 2018

RCSI-UCD Malaysia Campus
RCSI, jointly with University College Dublin (UCD), established Penang Medical College in Malaysia in 1996. In April 2018, following an extensive review process, the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education granted 'Foreign University Branch Campus' status to the college which has been re-named 'RCSI-UCD Malaysia Campus (RUMC)'. The award of Foreign University Branch Campus status recognises the quality of the educational programmes provided by RUMC, and the comparability of the student experience at RUMC with that at RCSI and/or UCD. RUMC is one of just eleven Foreign University Branch Campuses in Malaysia.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion within RCSI
Following a re-evaluation of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) issues within RCSI, and cognizant of the need to position the institution for a successful Athena-SWAN Bronze Award application, RCSI established an EDI Unit which is charged broadly with ensuring that the institutional culture is sensitive and responsive to the imperatives of EDI and, more narrowly, with coordinating the RCSI application for an Athena-SWAN Bronze Award. As noted previously, the QEO administered EDI surveys of staff and students to establish baseline data to inform the work of the new Unit.

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Additional teaching facilities on the Beaumont Hospital campus
RCSI completed Phase 2 of the Education and Research Centre (ERC) on the Beaumont Hospital campus. ERC Phase 2 provides an additional 30,000 sq. ft. of space incorporating a new student concourse at ground floor level to link the new facility with the existing ERC building. The new structure includes a series of flexible multi-functional tutorial rooms, open-plan faculty offices and meeting spaces on the first floor, with laboratory and research facilities on the second floor.

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

The RCSI Quality and Process Improvement Centre (QPIC) was established within the Department of Surgical Affairs (the RCSI postgraduate faculty of Surgery) to assist hospital management and clinical teams in conceiving and implementing practical solutions to deal with economic constraints and quality imperatives in the healthcare environment. QPIC takes skills that have largely been developed outside of healthcare (methodologies such as LEAN and Six Sigma) and translates their application to the healthcare environment, informed and guided by a deep understanding of how healthcare works. QPIC has led the implementation of the National Operating Theatre Quality Improvement Programme (TQIP) at a number of HSE hospitals, and delivers a wide range of educational and training programmes across the health service.

During this reporting period, QPIC began to focus also on similar issues within RCSI educational and training programmes. Guided by consistent themes arising in student satisfaction surveys, and in consultation with the Quality Enhancement Office (QEO), QPIC identified a trial project within the RCSI School of Medicine to apply process optimisation methods to the management of clinical rotations for medical students. The project has already had a significant effect on improving rotation management. Discussions have begun with a view to formalising the interaction between QEO and QPIC to identify and to address other issues that impact on the quality of the student experience.

Part 5: Objectives for the coming year

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

5.1 Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Plans
Plans for quality assurance and quality enhancement relating to strategic objectives for the next reporting period.

Initiatives planned for the next reporting period include:

[1] Implementation of a new over-arching RCSI Quality Framework;
[2] Revision of all Quality Committee policies & procedures, including internal QA review document templates and guidance documents;
[3] Development of a QEO Annual Work Programme;
[4] Commencement of the second Cycle of Reviews of overseas Branch Campuses & Programmes;
[5] Commencement of the second Cycle of Reviews of Administrative/Support Units;

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

Internal QA Reviews of Schools within the Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences
School of Postgraduate Studies
School of Nursing & Midwifery

Internal QA Reviews of Postgraduate Faculties
Department of Surgical Affairs

Internal QA Reviews of Administrative/Support Units
Communications Department

Internal QA Reviews of overseas Branch Campuses & Programmes
RCSI-Dubai

5.3 Other Plans

Pending the adjudication of its application for an Athena-SWAN Bronze Award, the EDI Unit will coordinate the planning for individual Athena-SWAN Bronze Award applications by two of the larger academic departments within the School of Medicine.

Part 6: Periodic Review

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

6.1 The Institution and External Review
A description of the impacts of institutional review within the institution.

RCSI has undergone institutional review twice during the past decade, firstly an Institutional Review coordinated by NQAI/HEA in the context of the activation of its independent degree-awarding powers in 2010 and, secondly, an Institutional Review coordinated by QQI in 2013-2014 in completion of the second Cycle of IUQB/QQI Reviews of the Irish Universities/Designated Awarding Bodies.

These reviews have been of fundamental importance as way-points in the evolution of RCSI from being solely a Recognised College of the National University of Ireland (NUI) to becoming a university-level health sciences higher education institution with independent degree-awarding powers (while remaining a Recognised College of NUI). The plans and structures put in place in preparation for these reviews, and the implementation of the Quality Improvement Plans arising from them, have guided our development. The reviews themselves have provided invaluable peer-validation and guidance to RCSI.

6.2 Self-Reflection on Quality Assurance
A short evaluative and reflective summary of the overall impact of quality assurance in the reporting period or, over a more extensive period, in the review.

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

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

As noted during the 2016-2017 reporting period, RCSI has instituted a new developmental theme/work-stream, coordinated by the Quality Enhancement Office, to assure the quality of experiential learning (i.e. clinical rotations) in RCSI undergraduate, postgraduate and professional education & training programmes in the health professions. It is intended that this will be a major Enhancement Theme in the context of the CINNTE Institutional Review of RCSI by QQI in 2022-2023.