

5. A Curricular Transformation Project - THEP

Teaching and Learning

THEP Design Team, and THEP Implementation Team
RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences



Introduction

Society and medicine are changing at an ever-accelerating rate. Publications have highlighted the critical importance of evolution in the training and education of doctors, to ensure they are equipped to work effectively in an ever-changing society. provide leadership as part of the medical world and support the development of health systems. Recognising this need, RCSI published its Transforming Healthcare Education, Research and Service Strategic Plan in 2018. This outlined how RCSI intended to deliver an unrivalled student experience, including through the transformation of medical education.

Initiative

The Transforming Healthcare Education Programme (THEP) Office was established including a dedicated team to oversee the design of the new medical programme. The THEP Office set about a “Discovery Phase” including visits to other medical educational institutions across North America and Europe. Events such as the RCSI International Educational Forum with invited keynote speakers were used to socialise curriculum design concepts and to gauge organisational fit. An External Advisory Group was established, consisting of several RCSI alumni, all experts in their fields.

RCSI has campuses across several international sites. A key objective of the design phase was to ensure that all key stakeholders (Academics; Research; Professional Services; Students; Schools; Departments; International Campuses etc.) were represented. As a result, a governance structure was designed, and implemented, as shown in Figure 1:

To support the design and ensure consistency of the new curriculum the THEP Office published a document: “Principles and Guidance for Planning and Development” “Module Design Guide” (Repository, Section X). Progress was reported to SMT and key governance committees via the Dean of the School of Medicine. Change management included regular communications with all key stakeholder groups. Critical engagement included:

- The establishment of a student involvement group to support students input to programme design.
- Institutional events to seek feedback from academic, clinical, and professional services and engagements at key governance committees to disseminate information.

The design phase concluded with the following key design elements agreed:

- Content –three pillars: Head (Knowledge); Hands (Skills); Heart (Professionalism; Leadership; Resilience).
- Teaching – introduction of new modalities (Case Based Learning; Interactive Large Group Teaching).
- Assessment – programmatic assessment, and a new Grade Point Average (GPA) system.
- Student Choice – providing an opportunity to broaden students’ scope of learning, and potential future research, elective and career options.
- Learning Communities – six learning communities across all years of the programme.
- Personal Tutor Programme – an allocated Personal Tutor to guide students on their learning journey.
- Clinical Placement Programme – a revised programme to maximise student time on clinical placement, to facilitate the students in developing networks and experience what it is to form part of a clinical team.

Once the programme design was agreed, the accreditation phase was initiated and coordinated by the THEP Office in collaboration with AQ&C. A dedicated accreditation team was established, and two independent external assessors (1xNUI; 1xRCSI) were identified. The programme was approved by MHSB and the NUI at the start of 2021. A cross-national THEP II implementation team was then established and tasked with the responsibility for preparing the new programme, the people, the systems, and the processes in time for the agreed launch date of September 2022 in both Dublin and Bahrain. The implementation programme included planning, workstream management, collaboration, and coordination with all key stakeholders across RCSI and monthly updates to the SMT.

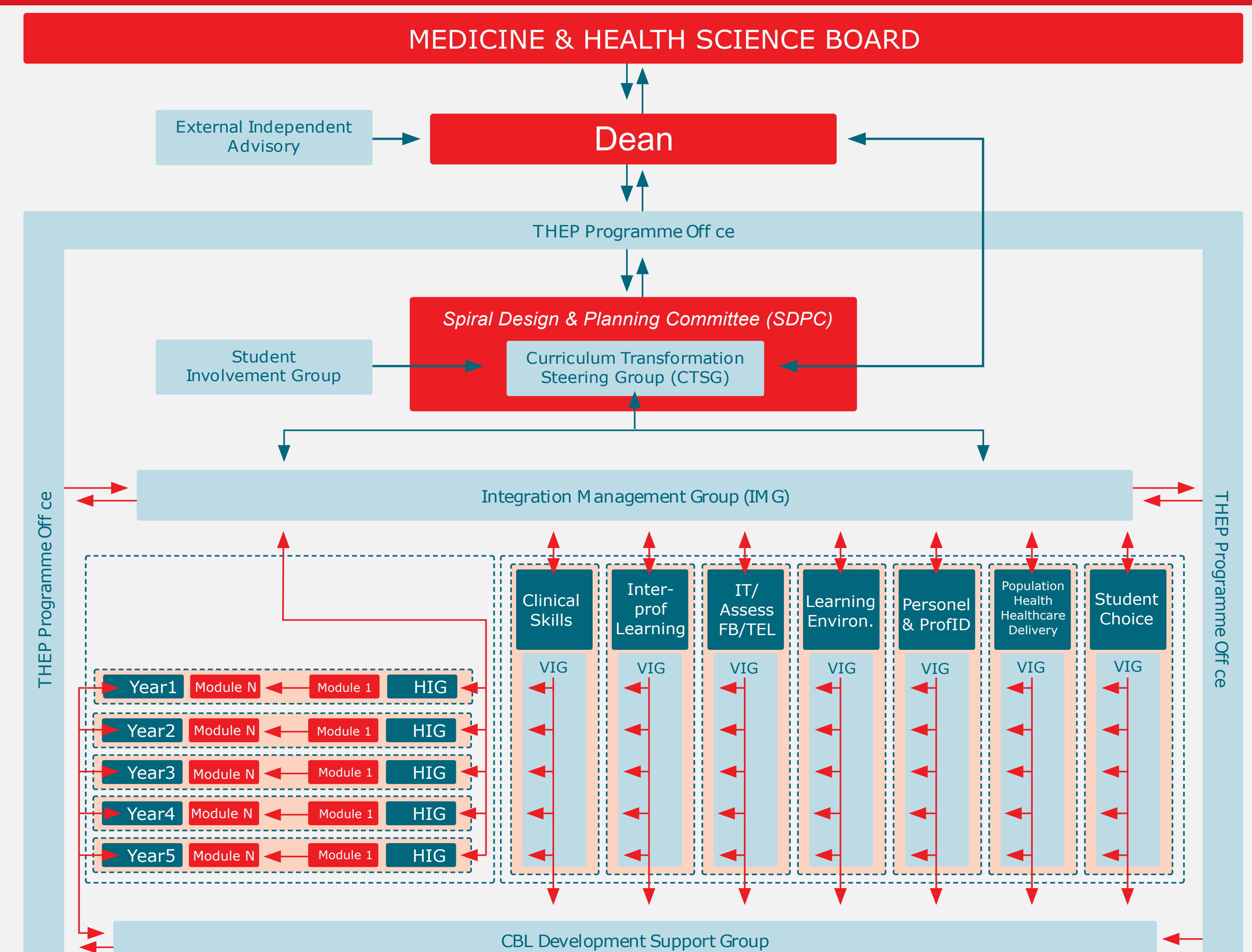


Figure 1: THEP Governance Structure

Outcome

Delivery of the new medical programme commenced in September 2022 for 344 students in Dublin and 221 students in Bahrain. This student cohort is anticipated to experience a different approach to:

1. The Learning Environment. Configured to encourage student engagement, foster lifelong relationships, encourage teamwork and collaboration, and to build a habit of lifelong learning. Features include Learning Communities, Personal Tutors and Learning and Teaching which emphasises “pedagogic resonance” and introduces case-based learning.

2. Feedback and Assessment using approaches which are designed to integrate assessment within the teaching and learning process, with a focus on assessment as and for learning. The assessment programme moves away from the traditional high-stakes assessment at the end of the year, and towards a consistent programme of assessment that informs the student of their progress as they navigate their learning journey. To promote transparency and consistency, assessment data will be communicated using a common GPA scale. This will permit data from multiple sources to be aggregated at the modular level, longitudinally to describe and communicate progress within pillars (Knowledge, Clinical Skills, and Personal and Professional Identity) and at the semester, year, and programme levels to allow more holistic judgements.

3. Technology – an innovative technology platform was designed, developed, and deployed to support the new medical programme. Students now have access to a dashboard of information on: learning schedules; assessment results and feedback; GPA grade; class cohort performance comparison; Personal Tutor notes and actions. Academics can use the technology to identify students who may be struggling to facilitate early remediation and support. Academics also can create and store assessment questions in a central assessment questions bank and can monitor the quality of their questions. Programme administration has become more efficient including through the removal of repetitive manual tasks and greater transparency around roles, responsibilities, and critical task timelines. Student evaluations will be undertaken at the end of each Semester to evaluate the impact of this new programme and identify opportunities for continuous enhancement as it is further rolled-out.