

# 3. A Programme Review Process Enhancement

## *Programmes of Education and Training*



**RCSI**  
UNIVERSITY  
OF MEDICINE  
AND HEALTH  
SCIENCES

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### Introduction

In 2016, RCSI embarked on an ambitious project to transform the MB, BCh, BAO (Hons) programme. This process, known as the Transforming Healthcare Education Project (THEP), was carried out in two phases. Given the ambitious nature of the project, the resultant changes proposed presented RCSI's accreditation system with a significant and complex process of programme reaccreditation. The scale and scope of this reaccreditation project required some novel approaches.

### Initiative

THEP resulted in a significantly revised curriculum, a new learning and teaching strategy and a new assessment strategy. These changes aim to equip graduates with the knowledge, skills, experiences, and attitudes that will enable them to thrive personally and to contribute meaningfully to healthcare and society in Ireland and the communities and countries where they choose to practice. The project required the programme proposers to apply for a major change to the existing curriculum. Given the scale of the project, both in terms of the size of the programme and the extent to which changes were being proposed, it was felt that innovation in the process was needed. Having considered this at the A&QC, the following elements to the existing process were added:

An extended review panel incorporating a range of expertise among panel members.

An agreement that panel members would address and review different areas of the proposal, rather than all reviewing all documentation.

Meetings between panel members and programme proposers to allow for clarifications or further probing of the proposal.

While these measures were pragmatic in nature, the main goal of implementing these changes was to allow the review to take place in the most rigorous and effective way. This entailed a different way of working for all involved and represented a departure from existing practice.

### Outcome

The approach taken to this accreditation proved to be very successful. The proposers achieved programme reaccreditation and the process by which this happened resulted in enhancement of the accreditation processes more generally. The primary benefit arose with the identification of a mechanism to allow programme proposers and reviewers to directly interact. Prior to this, it had been considered that written proposals should be given precedence and that interaction among the proposers and the review panel could impinge on the ability to make an objective decision. By managing the terms of the engagement between reviewers and proposers, this concern was alleviated while providing a forum where simple clarifications could be sought and provided without recourse to lengthy correspondence. Structured meetings were led by the A&QC Chair, whereby the items for discussion were identified in advance. Extending the panel to draw on different expertise also proved beneficial. While in the past more emphasis was placed on the subject expertise of the panel members, recognising the value of having non subject matter experts who had skills in curriculum development, more generally came to fore.

The alterations introduced to the process in the reaccreditation of this programme provided a pathway to changes that can be applied to all programme accreditations. Providing for structured contact between programme proposers and reviewers has been particularly successful and useful. This has enhanced the review process and contributes to the aim of having a rigorous process to ensure standards are met and adhered to, while introducing practical and simple steps that makes the process more user friendly for all involved.