

RCSI Strategy Development - Consultation and Engagement

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SCIENCES

Introduction

In 2022 RCSI completed its 5-year strategy, Transforming Healthcare Education, Research and Service. The new strategy, Innovating for a Healthier Future, was designed and launched in 2023. A key aim of the strategy development process was to create high levels of awareness and buy-in to the new strategy, while garnering input and insights from key stakeholders, through extensive internal and external consultation and engagement.

Initiative

As RCSI prepared to develop its new strategy, considerations included: changes in the external environment, such as the fundamental re-organisation of the Irish Health service, with Sláintecare and the new regional health areas; the after-shocks of the Covid Pandemic; challenges in engaging students; creating a vibrant campus experience; creating a positive culture in a hybrid work environment; and responding to the demand to graduate more healthcare professionals and trainees. In addition, wide external and internal engagement was required.

External engagement took place with government departments of health and education, regulators, funding bodies, politicians from all parties, key healthcare and education partners and the general public. As patient insights hold great significance in guiding RCSI towards continuous improvement and ensuring patients remain at the centre of what we do, RCSI engaged with patient partners and members of patient organisations to garner their thoughts, concerns, and suggestions regarding the future of RCSI.

Key internal engagement took place with student representatives and Student Union members at undergraduate and postgraduate level through focus groups, as well as utilising online surveys to garner feedback and suggestions on their key priorities for development. Staff feedback was acquired in person and through online surveys. The existing Senior Leaders Group (SLG) forum comprising leaders across education, research and professional services was used for cross-institutional workshops on key priorities for the next 5 years.

The Governing Committees of RCSI then both contributed to the development of the Strategy and approved the final plan. This included multiple meetings with the Academic Council, Medicine and Health Sciences Board, College Advisory Board and the Council. Finally, in tandem with the CINNTE review process, a key focus for the strategy development team was to collaborate with the Quality Enhancement Office (QEO) and the the Institutional Review Working Group so that each process would inform and support the other. To achieve this, dedicated time was protected with the Senior Management Team to align the findings from both processes. Both teams worked together in a synergistic approach and the QEO implemented both staff and student surveys for the strategic development process.



Figure 1 - Strategy consultative lunch with PPI contributors, patient partners and patient organisations

Strategy consultation: focus on Quality

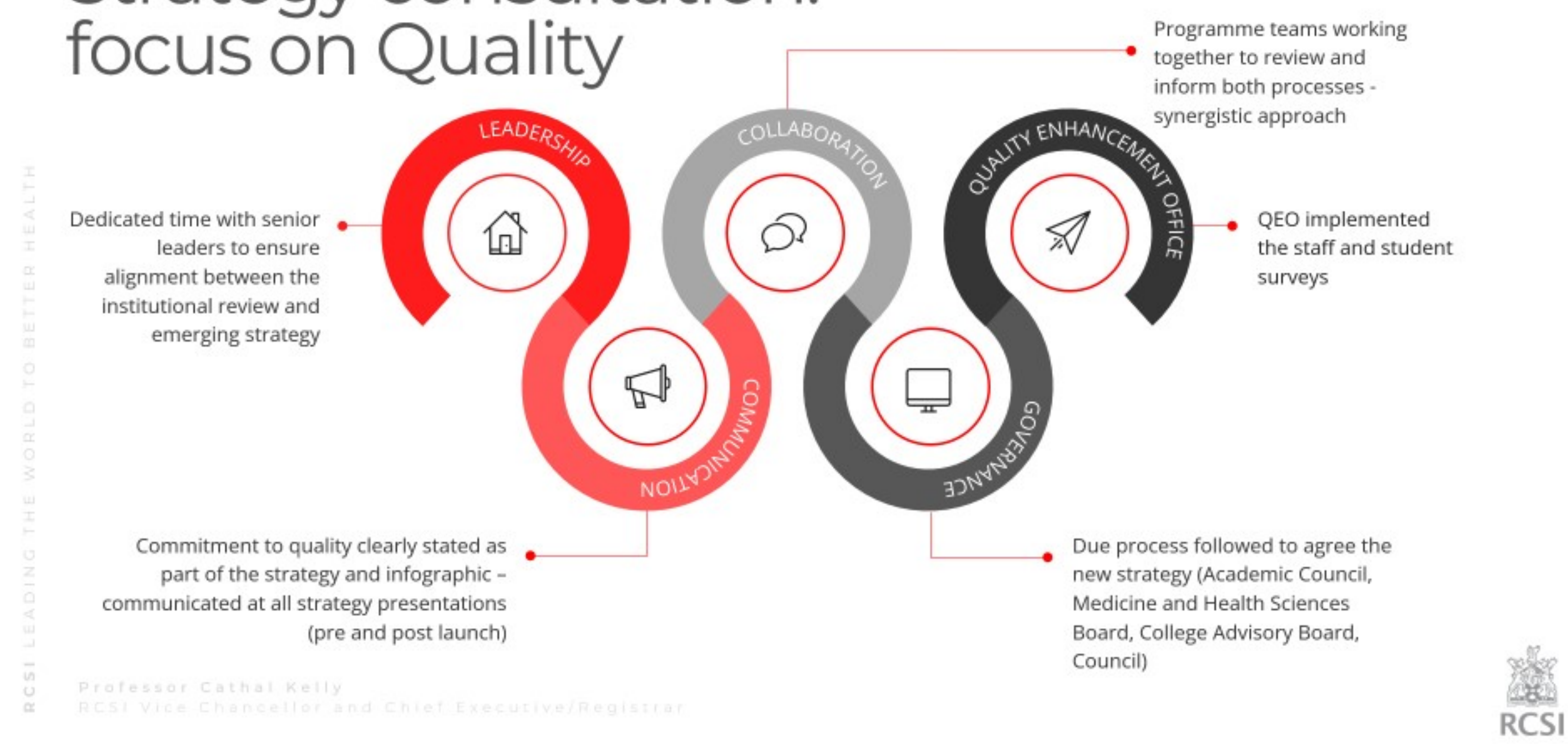


Figure 2 - Focus on quality in the strategy consultation

Outcomes

The contributions of key and varying stakeholders to shaping RCSI's strategy was invaluable, and RCSI appreciates their time and dedication to improving RCSI and creating a path for the future. Every engagement, observation and viewpoint contributed to the creation of the strategic direction for the Institution. The general feedback included the following:

1. RCSI is a high performing organisation that delivers on its promises
2. Link mission to leadership on broader societal challenges
3. Consider how/where we can work collaboratively to achieve goals
4. Be ambitious for the future – be unique
5. Focus on student success, enriching student experience, and patient engagement and involvement
6. Implementation
 - Deliver what we already have underway
 - Ensure our commitment to quality and developing organisational capacity

This feedback was incorporated into the structure, actions and implementation approach of the new strategy. A new theme on health and societal wellbeing was created, integrating the university and postgraduate training body within RCSI for greater impact. A dedicated strategic action was established to focus on enriching student life. Strategic actions are no longer team specific but rather cross-institutional initiatives, compelling collaboration and an emphasis on outcomes rather than inputs. Indeed, the title itself came from one of our Council members during the strategy consultation.

The new strategic plan, Innovating for a Healthier Future, 2023-2027, 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, with sustainability being added as a new foundation following consultation. As such, the University's work is driven by and built upon an unrelenting focus on quality. There is no doubt that the tandem institutional process for strategy development and the institutional review bolstered both outcomes. 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 which can be seen throughout the strategic plan.

In a recent staff survey administered through the QEO, with an aim to better understand staff views on the new RCSI Strategy Innovating for a Healthier Future 2023-2027:

- RCSI staff demonstrate a strong awareness of the new RCSI strategy, 89% of staff are aware of it.
- 56% of RCSI staff members have already read the new strategy
- 59% of staff stated that the strategy objectives are clear to them
- Academic staff declared the greatest understanding of their contribution to strategic goals (74% agreed), while 41% of all staff were unsure of having sufficient resources

RCSI credits engagement and involvement with staff, at every stage of strategy design and implementation, with their awareness of and commitment to the future plans for RCSI.