



## SUMMARY REPORT

### APRIL 2014

#### Background to the Review Process

In 2010, a review by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI), in relation to the commencement of its degree-awarding powers, confirmed the degree-awarding powers and recommended, inter alia, that an external review of RCSI by the national quality assurance body should take place no later than two years from the time of the granting of awarding powers to the institution, and should, as part of its remit, establish the level of implementation of the recommendations as set out in the (2010) review. Following the establishment of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) in November 2012, preparations for an external review of RCSI were further advanced by QQI. In October 2013, QQI commenced a review of RCSI. RCSI is confirmed as a designated awarding body in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012. The Legislation and Ministerial directions ensure that RCSI, similar to all higher education institutions, is subject to review and oversight by the relevant national external quality assurance body, QQI. Review, in this context, refers to the formal review of the effectiveness of the institution-wide quality assurance policies and procedures established and implemented by RCSI. This is an ad-hoc review in accordance with an agreed Terms of Reference.

#### Background to the Institution

The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) is the second oldest third-level academic institution in Ireland. RCSI is both [a] a health sciences Higher Education Institution with Schools of Leadership, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Physiotherapy and Postgraduate Studies, and [b] a Postgraduate Training Body in Surgery and related specialties. RCSI is one of four Royal Colleges of Surgeons in Great Britain and Ireland (Edinburgh, England, Glasgow and Ireland). The RCSI School of Medicine was established in 1886 and RCSI became a Recognised College of the National University of Ireland (NUI) in 1978. In the decade from 1996 to 2006, RCSI underwent significant expansion through the establishment of additional schools and institutes on the Dublin campus, and of three new international campuses (Penang Medical College, RCSI-Bahrain and RCSI-Dubai). Following an institutional review commissioned jointly by the HEA and the NQAI, RCSI was granted independent degree-awarding powers in 2010. In 2011, RCSI entered into a licensing agreement with Perdana University (PU; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia) to establish the PU-RCSI School of Medicine. In 2012, RCSI launched the '3U Partnership' in conjunction with Dublin City University and the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. In May 2013, RCSI was ranked in the top 200 medical schools in the world in the QS University Rankings.

#### The Review Team

The review was conducted by the following team of six reviewers, trained by QQI on 29 August 2013. The Planning Visit to RCSI was undertaken on 30 August 2013. The Main Review Visit was conducted by the full team from 21-25 October 2013.

**Professor Simon van Heyningen**  
Honorary Fellow and Emeritus Professor, University of Edinburgh, Scotland (Chair)

**Dr Christiane Gaehtgens**  
Consultant specialising in governance and quality assurance for universities and research institutes, Germany

**Professor James J Ward**  
Professor Emeritus, National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG)

**Mr Leon Cremonini**  
Research Associate at the Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS) at University of Twente (UT), The Netherlands

**Professor Charles F.A. Bryce**  
Professor Emeritus at Edinburgh Napier University (former Head of School of Life Sciences and Dean of Science)

**Mr Tony Platt**  
Assistant Director, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), UK (P/T) and Assistant Registrar, University of Essex, (P/T) UK (Co-ordinating Reviewer)

#### Review Team Conclusions

Based on the Review Team's evaluation of the Institutional Self Evaluation Report, supporting documentation and meetings conducted during the Main Review Visit, the Team found sufficient evidence to confirm:

Category:	Key Reviewer Findings
<b>Institutional strategic planning, governance and ownership of QA and enhancement</b>	The Review Team found that the institutional strategic planning, governance and ownership of quality assurance and enhancement is consistent with RCSI's role as an independent degree-awarding institution and consistent with the provisions of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012
<b>Consistency with ESG and other national and European guidelines and standards</b>	The Review Team found the Institution's quality assurance arrangements for national, transnational and collaborative provision to be consistent with Part 1 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and national, European and international guidelines and standards, particularly in accordance with the Bologna process
<b>Awarding body in the NQF</b>	RCSI planning, structure and systems support its responsibilities as an awarding body with qualifications recognised by the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)



## SUMMARY REPORT - CONTINUED

### APRIL 2014

#### Review Team Commendations\*

The Team found sufficient evidence to commend the following examples of good practice for further promotion internally, nationally and internationally:

1	The leadership and foresight of RCSI in promoting and further strengthening the quality culture and processes throughout the College.
2	The proactive role of the Dublin QEO in driving forward quality initiatives and putting into operation a formal Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement structure.
3	RCSI's comprehensive commitment to teaching and learning.
4	The intensified efforts towards strengthening research profile and activity at RCSI, the work undertaken in developing a research strategy and in monitoring research performance.
5	The long-standing approach and commitment to student welfare.

#### Review Team Recommendations\*

The Team found sufficient evidence to recommend the following activities to RCSI for attention and development:

1	A clearer separation should be established between the governance of RCSI's Surgical College functions and that of its health professions education activities, whilst retaining RCSI's trustee function for the whole institution through its Council.
2	The role of the Surgical and Postgraduate Faculties Board and the relationship of the postgraduate faculties to the Board should be reviewed to facilitate closer integration of processes and procedures in quality assurance, curriculum design and the dissemination of good practice.
3	RCSI should carry out further work to clarify the focus of research activities, develop a distinctive research profile, seek external expertise and consider carefully the choice of appropriate indicators for modes of research and undertake benchmarking against other institutions.
4	RCSI should build on its existing arrangements to work towards achieving consistency of quality of experience in clinical placements.
5	Whilst the Review Team recognised that the issue of internship placement is a problem faced by all medical schools both in the United Kingdom and in the Republic of Ireland, and that, as highlighted by RCSI, in Ireland the Health Service Executive (HSE) is ultimately responsible for the overall management of internship placement, the Review Team recommends that action should be taken to increase student confidence about securing internships by ensuring that, as far as humanly possible, an internship place is provided for every student.

\*The five key commendations and recommendations are presented in the Summary Report. A comprehensive list of all commendations and recommendations made by the review team are presented in the Conclusions Section of the full RCSI Review Report

#### QQI Board Ratification

The QQI Board received and considered the Review Team's report on the Review of RCSI at its meeting on 11 April 2014.

The Board formally signed off the report for publication, having satisfied itself that the review process was completed in accordance with published criteria.

#### Further Information

The full RCSI Review Report, alongside the institutional response, is published on the QQI Website at:

[www.QQI.ie](http://www.QQI.ie)

Further information on the QQI Institutional Review process and the range of quality assurance and enhancement activities undertaken by QQI can also be found on the QQI Website.