



RCSI

UNIVERSITY
OF MEDICINE
AND HEALTH
SCIENCES

INTERNAL QUALITY REVIEW THEMATIC ANALYSIS FINDINGS

Thematic Analysis of
the Reports of RCSI's
Internal Quality Reviews
across schools, faculties,
professional support
units and overseas

Quality Enhancement Office
September 2022



RCSI LEADING THE WORLD TO BETTER HEALTH

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Thematic Analysis of the Reports of RCSI's Internal Quality Reviews across schools, faculties, professional support units and overseas

Quality Enhancement Office
September 2022

1. Background

The RCSI Quality Enhancement Office (QEO) operates a system of rolling internal quality reviews (IQRs). This process involves three distinct phases; self-assessment, external validation, and quality improvement planning. Since 2011, the QEO has overseen twenty-nine IQRs across schools, faculties, professional support units and overseas campuses. On completion of each review process, the Peer Review Group Report and Quality Improvement Plan are published on the RCSI website.

RCSI is currently preparing for Institutional Review within Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI's) CINNTE Review cycle. As part of RCSI's self-reflection, it was determined that a thematic analysis of the IQR Peer Review Group Reports would support identification of cross-institutional areas for potential enhancement whilst also providing insight on the impact of a key quality enhancement activity.

This report outlines the process undertaken to conduct a thematic analysis of IQRs and the outcomes of that process. It is expected that this review will identify areas for cross-institutional consideration and/or enhancements to the internal quality review process.



2. Executive Summary

Undertaking this Thematic Analysis has demonstrated that, since inception of the Internal Quality Review (IQR) process, reviews have taken place consistently and successfully, with schools, professional support units, faculties and overseas campuses engaging in a positive and meaningful way.

29 IQR's have taken place since the processes inception in 2011 and we are now well into our second cycle of reviewing departments across RCSI. Reviews have been undertaken in a wide-range of schools (6), faculties (4), overseas campuses (3) and professional support units (10). Six departments have been reviewed twice (2nd cycle) with the average duration between reviews being approx. 7 to 8 years.



Within the 29 reports, a total of 1164 findings were noted with the average number of findings per report being 40 (range 17-85). 58% of all findings were recommendations, whilst 42% were commendations. 64% of all findings were considered applicable at departmental level, 13% at institutional level whilst the remaining 23% were deemed applicable to both.

To best support identification of cross institutional areas for potential enhancement, 14 themes were identified to examine against all findings. These themes somewhat aligned with the key areas identified within the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines, 2016. The average number of findings (recommendations or commendations) per theme was 200 with processes and procedures being the most prevalent theme with 488 findings applicable to it.

The main findings of particular interest within the themes are summarised below:

- The largest number of commendations (258) were related to the theme of **service quality**; staff across RCSI were recognised consistently for their positive, professional attitude toward the review process, their dedication to their roles and the calibre of their work.
- The largest number of recommendations were categorised to the themes of **process, procedure and governance** (388) and **quality assurance** (217). Recommendations in both of these areas had a strong focus on the documentation of practices.
- Some themes were very prevalent; **service quality** (338), **communication & engagement** (326), **staff training and development** (272), **process, procedure and governance** (488) and **quality assurance** (382), whilst other themes were less dominant; **teaching & learning** (92), **assessment of learners** (25), **workload modelling** (82), **space/facility requirements** (56) and **curricula development & review** (79).
- Within many themes, sub-themes were identified e.g. within the service-quality theme, sub themes included the dedication and helpfulness of staff and further development of workplace processes and procedures.
- Classification of themes and subthemes has the potential to support both institutional planning and the identification of areas for enhancement as part of the CINNTE Institutional Review.

Upon completion of this report the QEO noted several areas for possible further investigation such as:

1. Comparison of 1st cycle and 2nd cycle IQR's, were changes made on foot of the recommendations; were QIPs implemented? Did changes have an impact?
2. Further classification of sub-themes.

As a result of this process, the QEO will consider revisions to peer review group guidance regarding the number of findings made in each review, highlighting of key findings, consideration of the impact of any previous reviews, and distinction between institutional level and departmental findings.



29 Reports



14 Themes



1164 Findings

3. Reports Reviewed

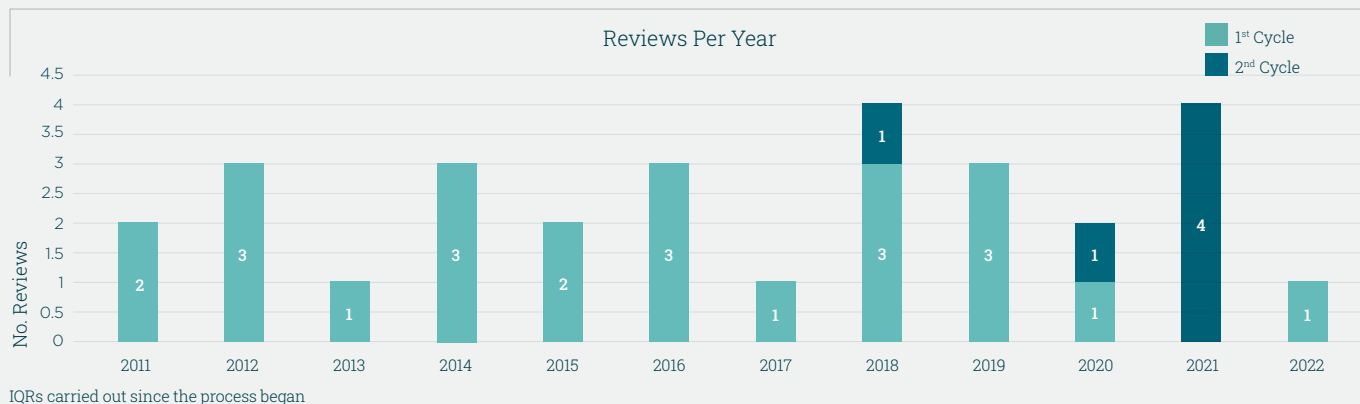
The following is a list of all IQR Peer Review Group Reports that were reviewed under the Thematic Analysis:

2011	1. Examination Office - 2011
	2. School of Postgraduate Studies - 2011
2012	3. Student Services - 2012
	4. School of Physiotherapy - 2012
	5. Institute of Leadership - 2012
2013	6. Library Services - 2013
2014	7. RCSI & DCU Joint review of Penang Medical College - 2014
	8. School of Pharmacy - 2014
	9. Human Resources - 2014
2015	10. Office of Research & Innovation - 2015
	11. Quality Enhancement Office - 2015
2016	12. School of Medicine - 2016
	13. Estate & Support Services - 2016
	14. Admissions Office - 2016
2017	15. RCSI Bahrain - 2017
2018	16. Conference & Events - 2018
	17. School of Nursing & Midwifery - 2018
	18. Department of Surgical Affairs - 2018
	19. School of Postgraduate Studies - 2018*
2019	20. RCSI Dubai - 2019
	21. Faculty of Sports & Exercise Medicine - 2019
	22. Student Academic Regulatory Affairs - 2019
2020	23. IT Department - 2020
	24. Library Services- 2020*
2021	25. School of Physiotherapy - 2021*
	26. Human Resources - 2021*
	27. Quality Enhancement Office - 2021*
	28. Office of Research & Innovation - 2021*
2022	29. Irish Institute of Pharmacy IIOP - 2022

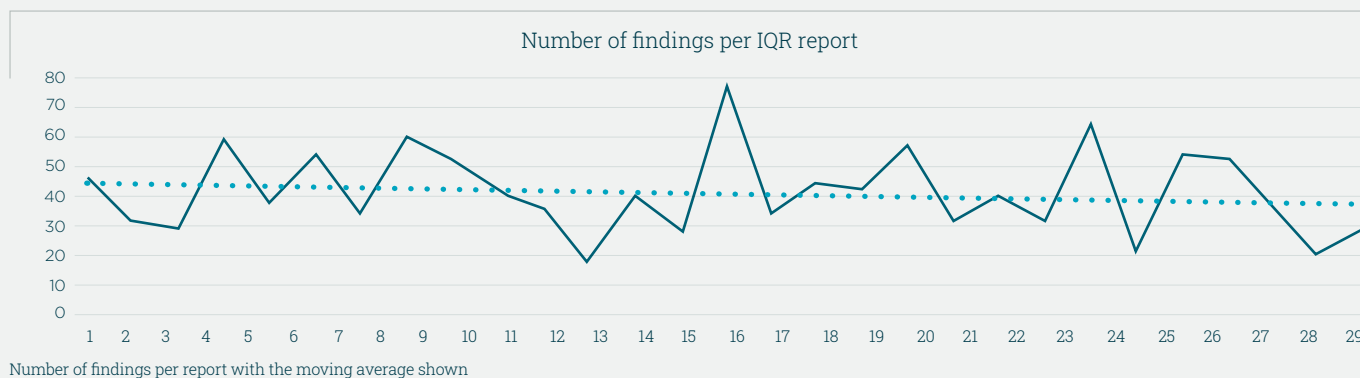
*2nd cycle review

4. Methodology

A Senior Project Specialist from the Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs was tasked with undertaking this desk-based review. This was considered important to enhance objectivity. Regular meetings were held with both the Head of the Quality Enhancement Office (QEO) and the QEO Team to provide context and answer queries as they arose. Categorisation of the findings was determined by the Senior Project Specialist and hence are subjective in nature. Nonetheless it is considered that this review was sufficiently robust for the purposes intended.



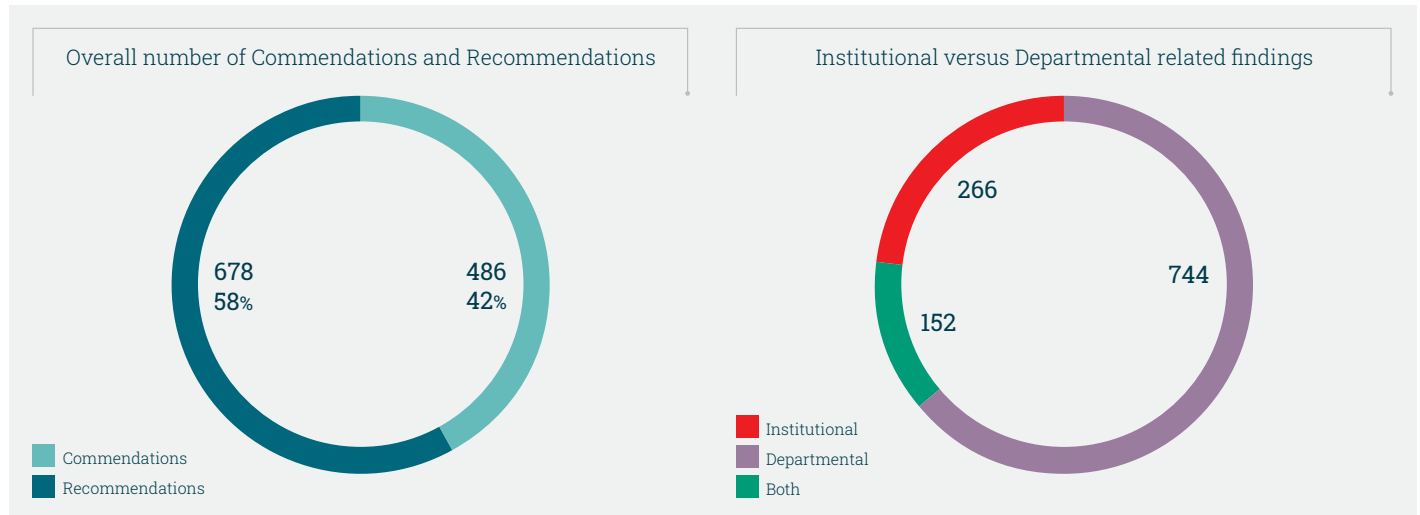
The graph above highlights that a consistent number of reviews have been taking place each year since RCSI Quality Enhancement Office (QEO) first undertook this process. The 2nd cycle refers to where a department has been reviewed for a 2nd time. As can be seen, six departments have now been reviewed twice. These repeat reviews were carried out approximately 7 years after the first reviews, whilst other departments have now gone 10 years since their last review. The schedule of reviews is approved by the Quality Committee and published on the QEO webpage on the RCSI website. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Quality Committee mandated the deferral of reviews and an adjustment to the schedule of reviews. All units appearing to have gone more than 7 years since review are either currently under review, have commenced planning for review or no longer existing in their previous format (Examinations Office).



1164 findings were logged in total over 29 IQR reports carried out between 2011 and 2021. The mean number of findings per report was 40 with a range of 58, indicated between the School of Medicine which had 17 findings and RCSI Bahrain which had 75.

5. Categorisation of Findings

The data was first broken down into Commendations and Recommendations. 486 of the findings were commendations, whilst 678 were recommendations.



Each finding was further categorised as being relevant at institutional or departmental level. 152 findings were categorised as applicable at institutional level whilst 744 were applicable at departmental level with 266 findings being deemed relevant at both institutional and departmental levels for consideration.

6. Selection of Themes

Themes were assigned based on the findings that were reviewed in the first number of reports together with common areas of university focus, such as Curriculum, Learning and Assessment and Supports for Learners, and taking consideration of the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines, 2016. As each report was reviewed, some new themes emerged whilst others morphed into a more relevant theme as patterns emerged. Findings from all 29 reports were then categorised under the themes applicable to them. The final 14 themes used within this thematic analysis are as follows:

1. Service quality
2. Teaching and learning
3. Assessment of learners
4. Supports for learners
5. Communication, visibility and engagement
6. Staff training, development and recruitment
7. Workload modelling and resourcing
8. IT, simulation and data
9. External relations
10. Space and facility requirements
11. Processes, procedures and governance
12. Quality assurance
13. Curricula development and review
14. Research activities

7. Findings within Themes

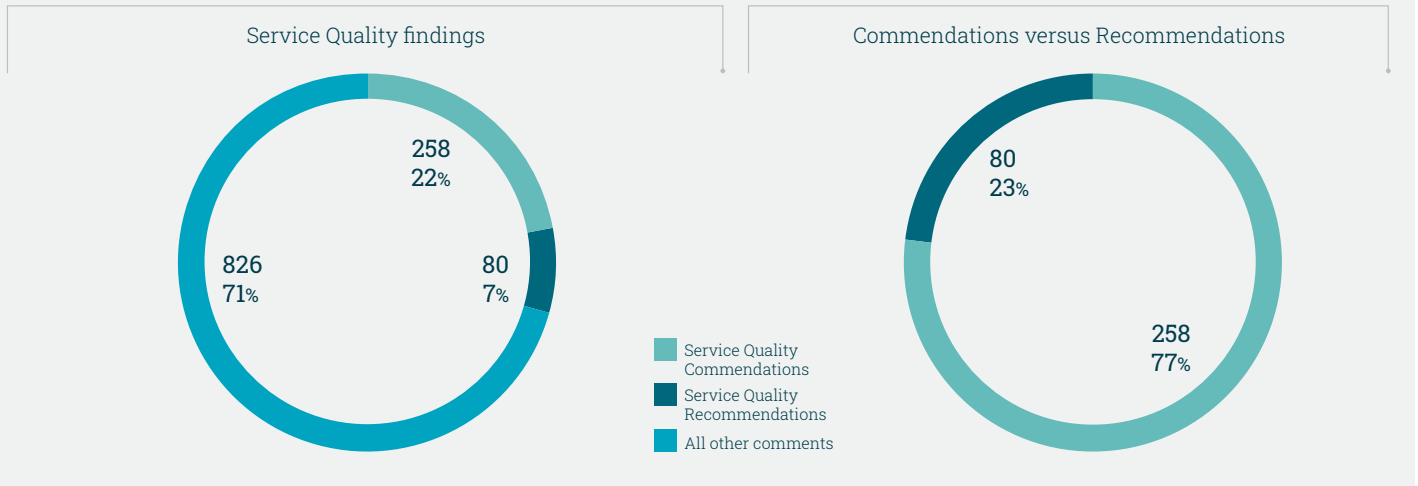
Upon completion of the categorisation process of all findings into their relevant themes, the next phase of the project was to analyse each of the 14 themes. The analysis was searching for patterns within the data to ascertain strengths and weaknesses, areas for improvement or continued enhancement.



7. Findings within Themes

7.1 SERVICE QUALITY

338 findings (29% of the overall findings) were logged as applicable to service quality. 258 of these (77%) were commendations and 80 (23%) were recommendations. This is a credit to all staff across RCSI who were recognised consistently for their positive, professional attitude toward the review process as well as their dedication to their roles within the institution.



Commendations:

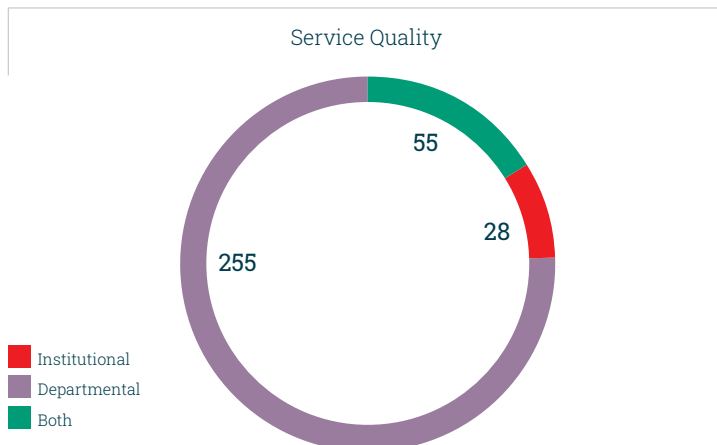
All 29 Internal reviews highly commended the professionalism, dedication and helpfulness of staff to go above and beyond in their duties to assist students, fellow staff and the quality peer review groups.

Recommendations:

The main recommendations that were flagged, relating to service quality, were in relation to the establishment of workplace processes and procedures which would enable the better running of the school or department. There was not one negative comment relating to faculty/staff in any of the recommendations.

Institutional versus departmental findings:

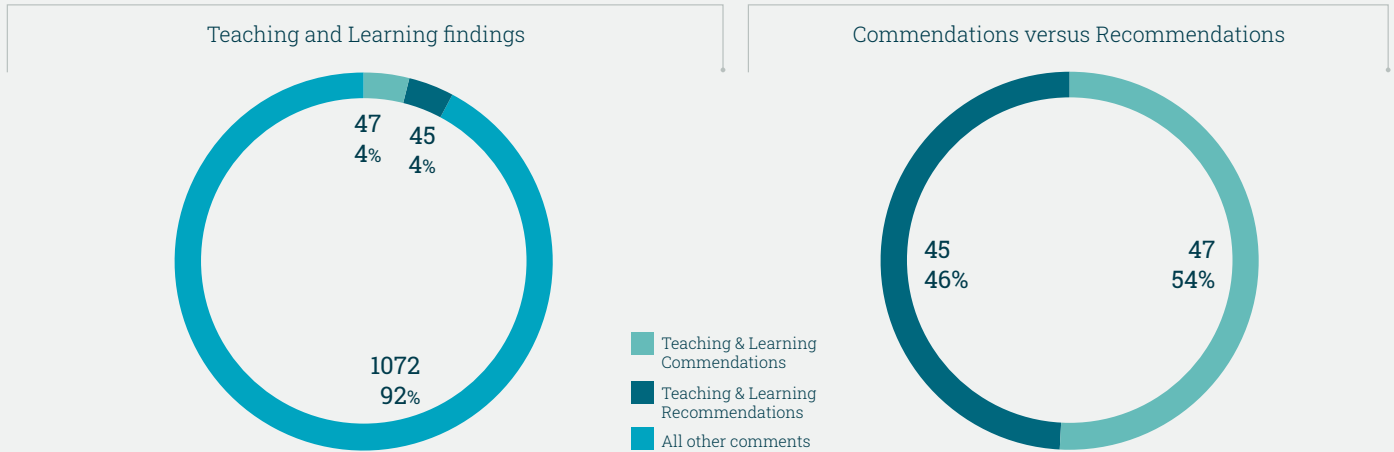
255 of these findings were deemed departmental, 28 institutional with 55 applicable to both.



7. Findings within Themes

7.2 TEACHING AND LEARNING

92 findings (8% of the overall findings) were logged as applicable to teaching & learning. 47 of these were commendations and 45 were recommendations.



Commendations:

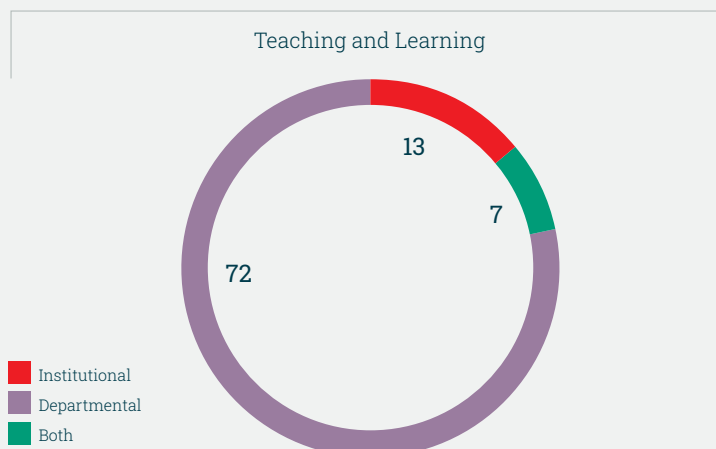
All 11 schools reviewed were commended for their teaching and learning. Findings related to the calibre of faculty, student enjoyment, high levels of innovation and world class training facilities available.

Recommendations:

The main recommendations that arose, relating to teaching and learning, referred to the ongoing review, development and formalisation of processes and procedures around teaching and learning. The recent introduction of learning, teaching and assessment principles as well as the ongoing work formalising the RCSI Learning, Teaching & Assessment (LTA) strategy should support enhancement in this area. Nearly half of the points raised related to curriculum development and review. Less than a quarter of the points related to staff requirements for training or resources while a quarter of the findings related to communication and engagement.

Institutional versus departmental findings

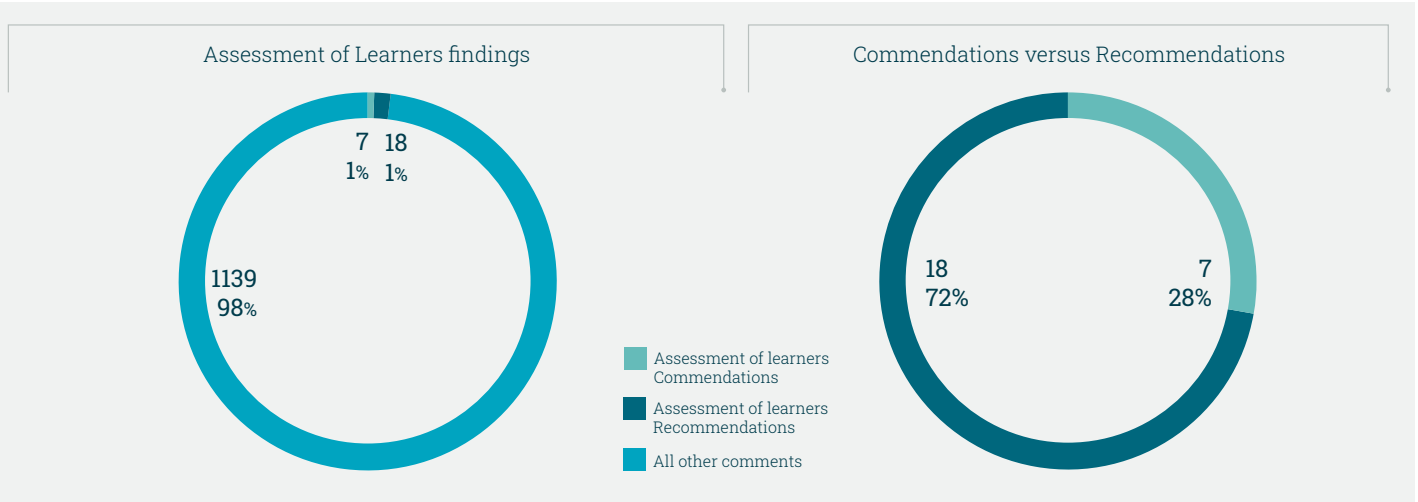
72 of these findings were deemed departmental, 7 institutional with 13 applicable to both.



7. Findings within Themes

7.3 ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS

Findings relating to the assessment of learners were not common and only 25 (2%) were noted within the entire review out of a total of 1164 findings. 7 of these were commendations and 18 were recommendations.



Commendations:

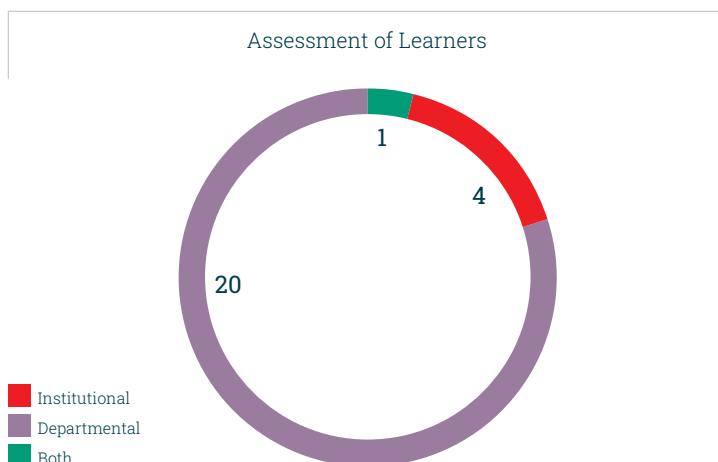
Noted under here was the excellent work of the Examinations Office (now part of the Student Academic and Regulatory Affairs (SARA) department) and the overall satisfaction of both undergraduate and postgraduate students around communication and running of exams.

Recommendations:

The main recommendations, flagged as relating to assessment of learners, were in relation to the creation of an assessment calendar as well as the development of an assessment strategy.

Institutional versus departmental findings:

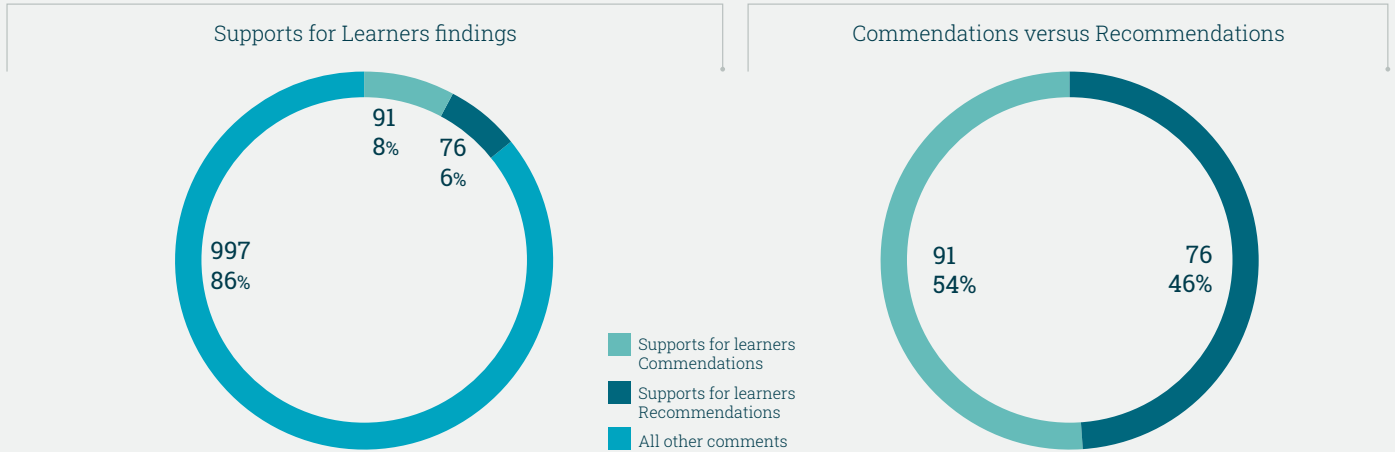
20 of these findings were deemed departmental, 4 institutional with 1 applicable to both.



7. Findings within Themes

7.4 SUPPORTS FOR LEARNERS

167 findings (14%) were logged as applicable to supports for learners. 91 of these were commendations and 76 were recommendations.



Commendations:

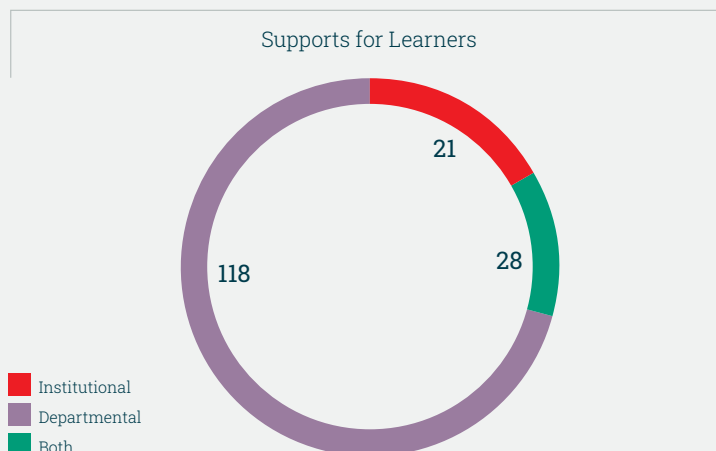
Nearly all commendations relating to supports for learners were related to Service Quality and it was evident throughout all the internal reviews that RCSI go above and beyond to accommodate the needs of their students and scholars. Another theme that related very closely to supports for learners was communication and visibility with an honest open relationship consistently noted between RCSI staff and the students.

Recommendations:

The main recommendations that were flagged relating to supports for learners were in relation to IT, support for postgraduate students, representation of the student voice, feedback for students, proactive communication channels and faculty/learner relationships, the provision of private spaces, supports during placement, induction and orientation, equal opportunities, facilities etc. across all school and programmes.

Institutional versus departmental findings:

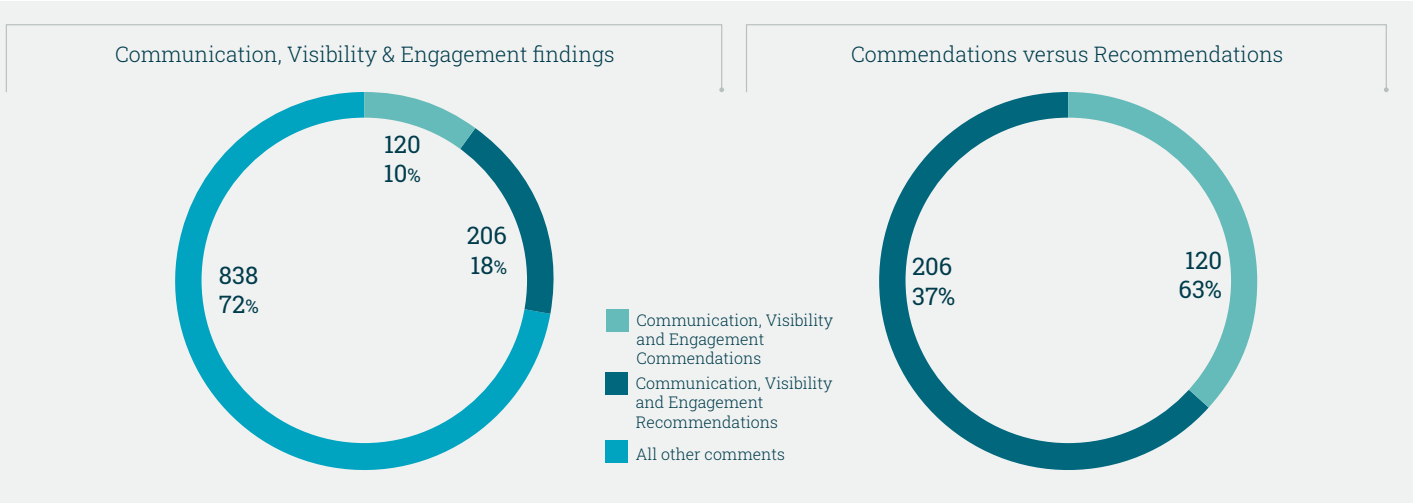
118 of these findings were deemed departmental, 21 institutional with 28 applicable to both.



7. Findings within Themes

7.5 COMMUNICATION, VISIBILITY AND ENGAGEMENT

326 findings (28%) were logged as applicable to communication, visibility and engagement. 120 of these were commendations and 206 were recommendations.



Commendations:

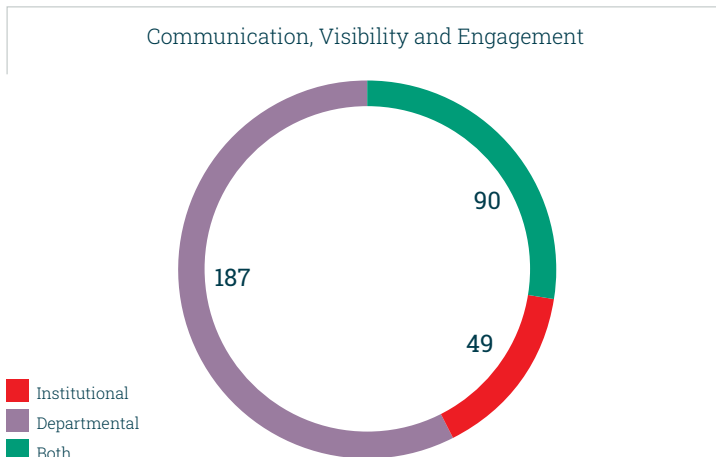
Communication was commended across all departments and schools and this theme was found to be broadly linked to “External Relations”. It is clear that RCSI is continuously striving to enhance communications among all stakeholders.

Recommendations:

When this theme was reviewed against all recommendations it was apparent that this is linked mostly with processes and procedures and the need for more structured systems in place to embed communication. The main recommendations that were flagged were clarification of relationships, roles, structured meetings and organisation structures, more formal learner/ faculty interaction outside of teaching times, reassessment of new starter information communication, and, on a number of occasions, the introduction of a communication plan was proposed.

Institutional versus departmental findings:

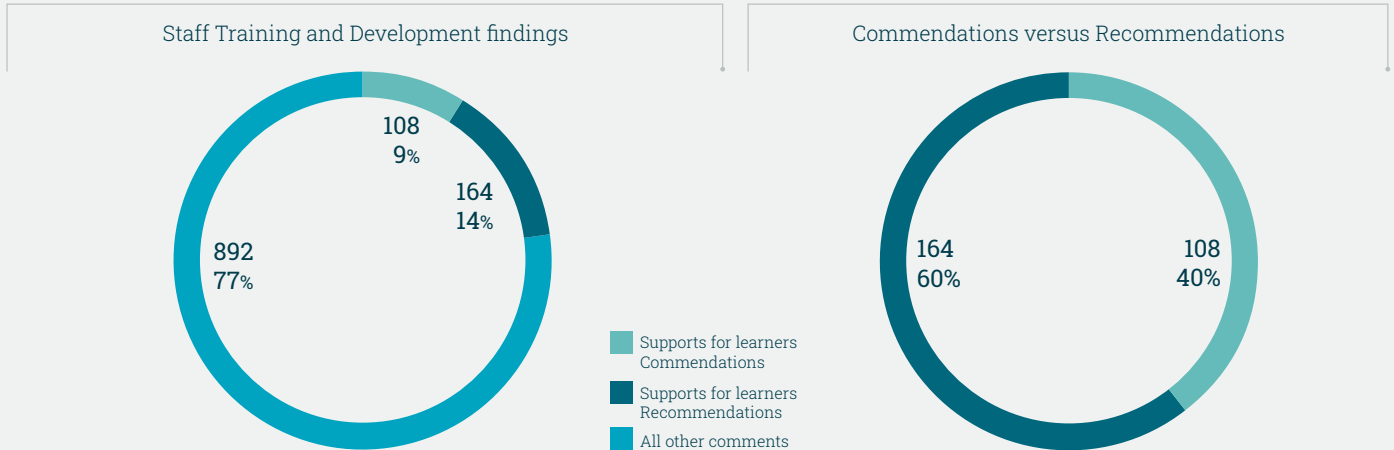
187 of these findings were deemed departmental, 49 institutional with 90 applicable to both.



7. Findings within Themes

7.6 STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

272 findings (23%) were logged as applicable to staff training and development. 108 of these were commendations and 164 were recommendations.



Commendations:

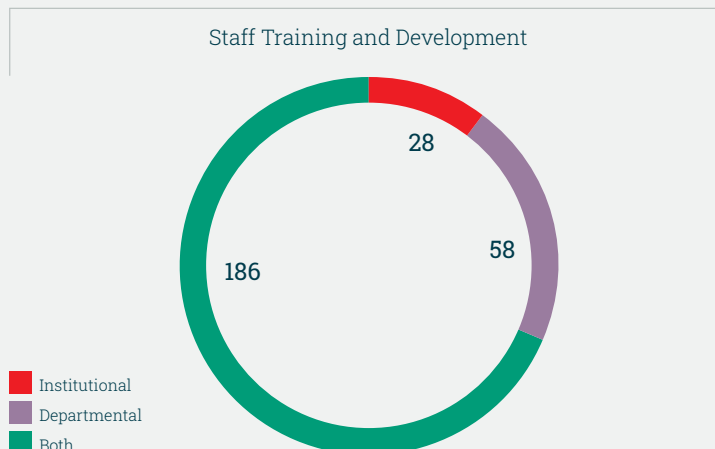
When this theme was filtered against commendations, an immediate relationship with the service quality theme was revealed and a further analysis of the data showed that most findings relate to the calibre and expertise of staff and faculty across RCSI. New appointments are also commended as well as the overall ethos and positive working environments across departments.

Recommendations:

The main recommendations that were flagged relating to staff training & development were in relation to, pathways for promotion and career progression (particularly for non-academic staff), staff awards, support for junior staff and researchers, a return-to-work scheme, succession planning, administrative support requirements, upskilling, future planning of staffing levels and support for managers.

Institutional versus departmental findings:

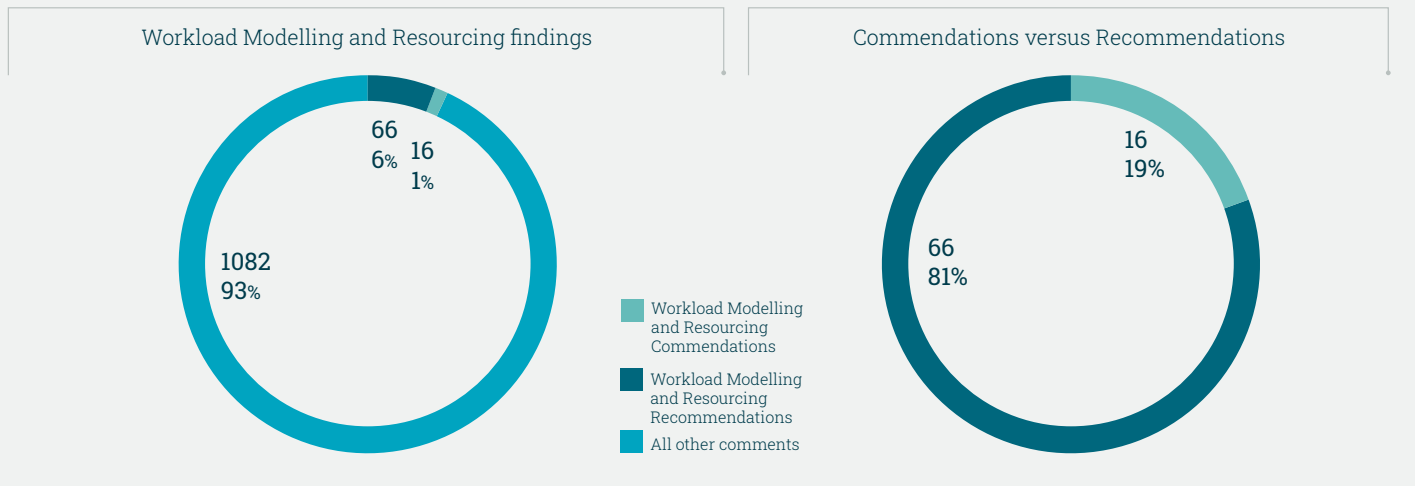
186 of these findings were deemed departmental, 28 institutional with 58 applicable to both.



7. Findings within Themes

7.7 WORKLOAD MODELLING AND RESOURCING

82 findings (7%) were considered applicable to workload modelling and resourcing. 16 of these were commendations and 66 were recommendations.



Commendations:

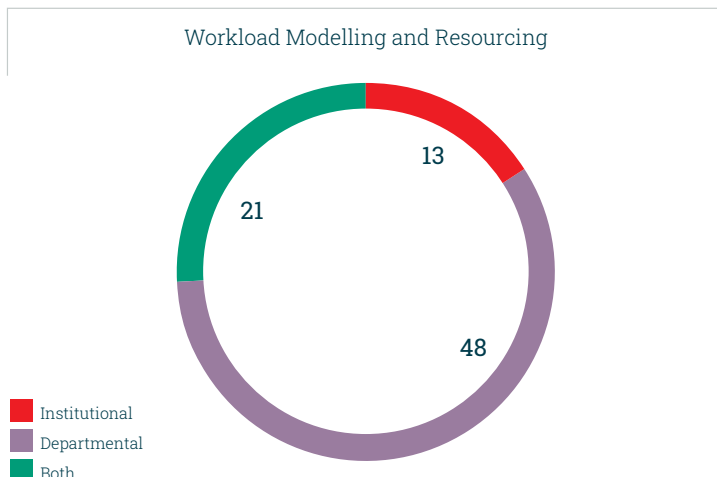
62% of findings here were linked to the service quality theme commending additional resources put in place in response to growth and demand. There were also commendations relating to the dedication and resourcefulness of staff given the growing demands of their role due to the rapid and expanding nature of RCSI. The development of the hybrid working model was also commended.

Recommendations:

20 out of the 29 reviews had recommendations against this theme. Specific areas identified were workload distribution, resourcing for an increasing student population, increased workload and activities, clarity around roles, administration duties and freeing up staff time to develop new programmes and further research activities.

Institutional versus departmental findings:

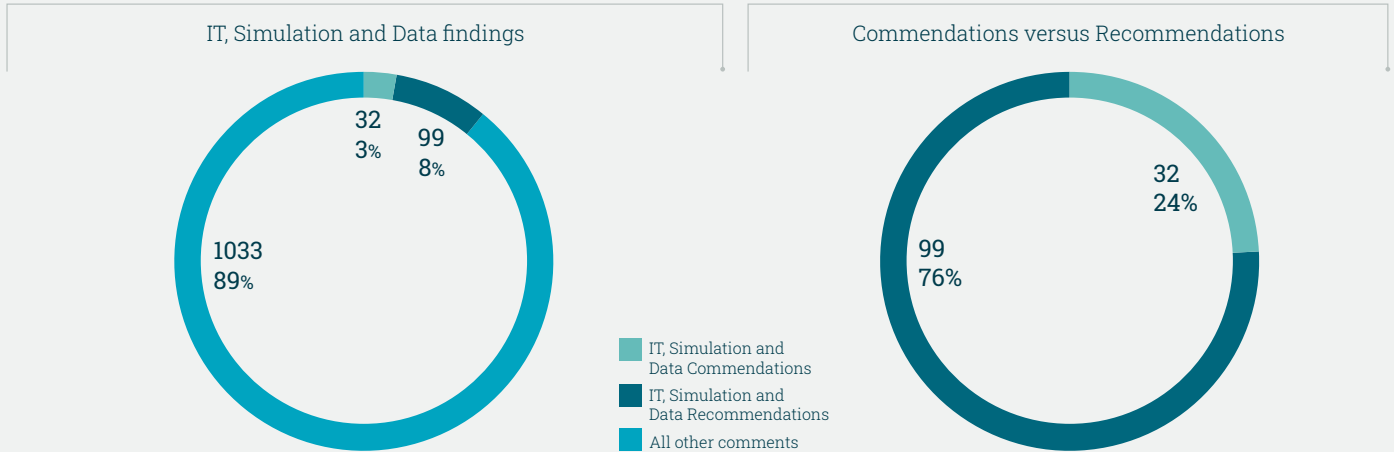
48 of these findings were deemed departmental, 13 institutional with 21 applicable to both.



7. Findings within Themes

7.8 IT, SIMULATION AND DATA

131 findings (11%) were logged as applicable to IT/SIM/Data. 32 of these were commendations and 99 were recommendations.



Commendations:

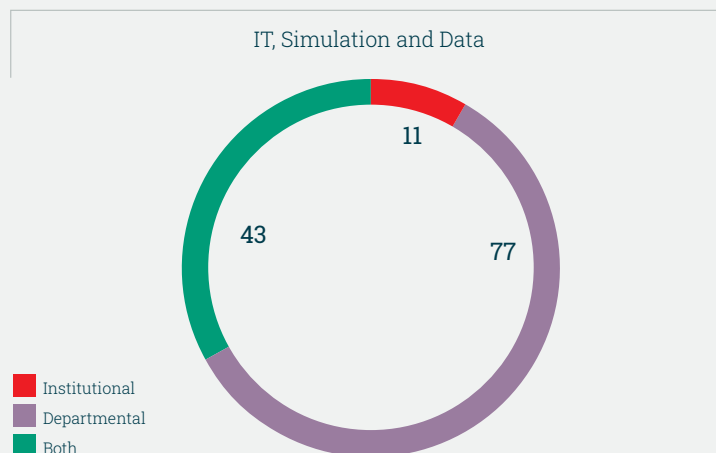
The IT department were commended for their well-defined processes and excellent security systems.

Recommendations:

It was noted that most IT recommendations were from within professional support units. Most recommendations were related to RCSI maintaining and enhancing current capabilities. With IT being such a progressive and ever-changing field, it is imperative that RCSI invest and continually incorporate IT as part of their strategic objectives to maintain their high level of excellence. Ensuring that IT requirements are firmly embedded within all aspects of RCSI is critical, by implementing formal policies and procedures and maintaining certain levels of quality assurance and a continuous cycle of staff training and resourcing.

Institutional versus departmental findings:

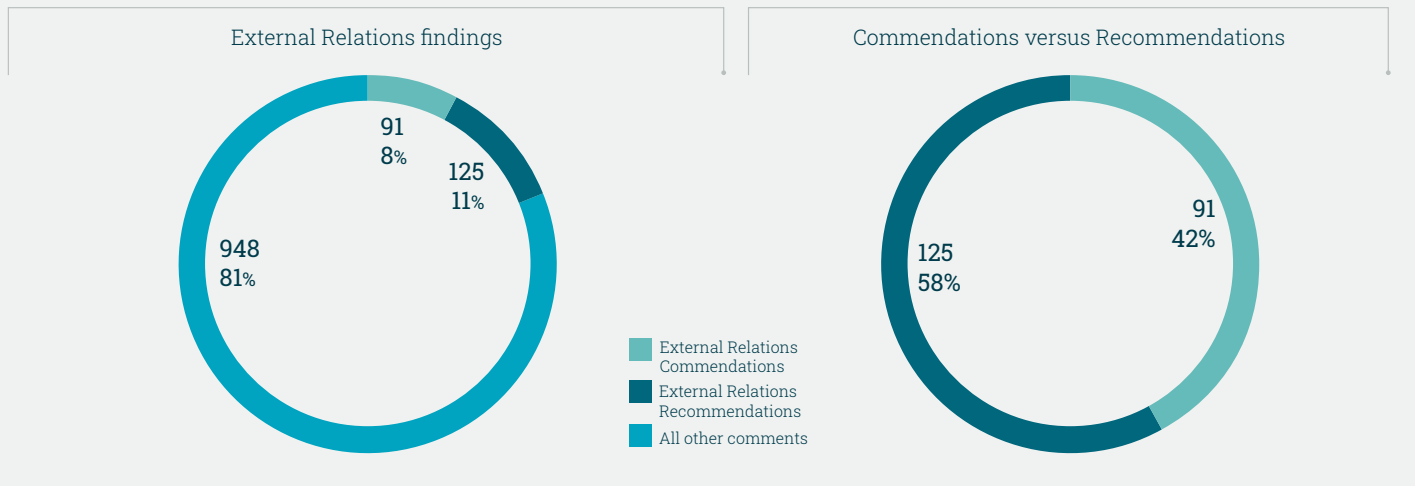
77 of these findings were deemed departmental, 11 institutional with 43 were applicable to both.



7. Findings within Themes

7.9 EXTERNAL RELATIONS

216 findings (19%) were logged as applicable to external relations. 91 of these were commendations and 125 were recommendations.



Commendations:

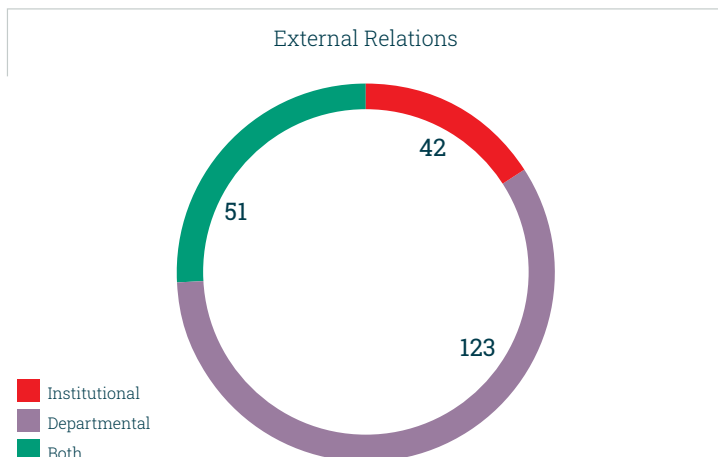
8 schools, 9 departments and all campuses were commended for their external relations with stakeholders. Among commendations of note, were schools’ collaboration with other universities, hospitals, external committees, representation of themselves, relationship building in the Irish healthcare sector, international partnerships, and RCSI’s approach to Intellectual Property. Departments were commended for relationships with support services for students, responding to the needs of the local health service community, being up to date with international best practice, engagement with external professional bodies and raising the external reputation of RCSI.

Recommendations:

Examples of findings here were; understanding of future demand (student numbers), increasing the profile of certain departments, clarification of relationships with external bodies, further involvement in external committees, external benchmarking, further enhancement of alumni relationships, engagement of more clinical sites, enhancement of international recruitment and further engagement with international RCSI campuses. Within RCSI International campuses the following areas for improvement in external relations were specifically highlighted: strengthening of links with external stakeholders, further community engagement, and an outreach programme within the curriculum across all campuses and a more comprehensive approach to monitoring standards.

Institutional versus departmental findings:

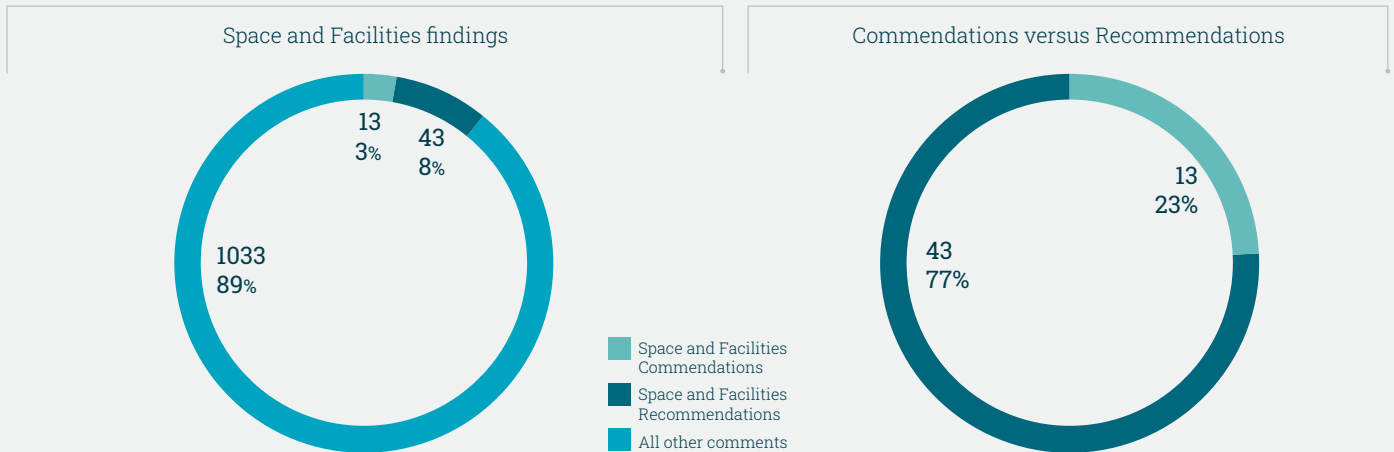
123 of these findings were deemed departmental, 42 institutional with 51 were applicable to both.



7. Findings within Themes

7.10 SPACE AND FACILITIES

56 findings (5%) were considered applicable to space and facilities. 13 of these were commendations and 43 were recommendations.



Commendations:

There were 13 commendations relating to space and facilities,. The commendations related to the quality of the student accommodation, student services continuous striving to improve facilities for students, high quality of offices and facilities within certain departments and the investment and maintenance of this infrastructure.

Recommendations:

There were 43 space/facility related recommendations noted. These included findings relating to secure working environments with private space, understanding of future growth/demand relative to space requirements, that the critical role of support services and staff feedback be considered in all future design of facilities and the provision of adequate research space.

Institutional versus departmental findings:

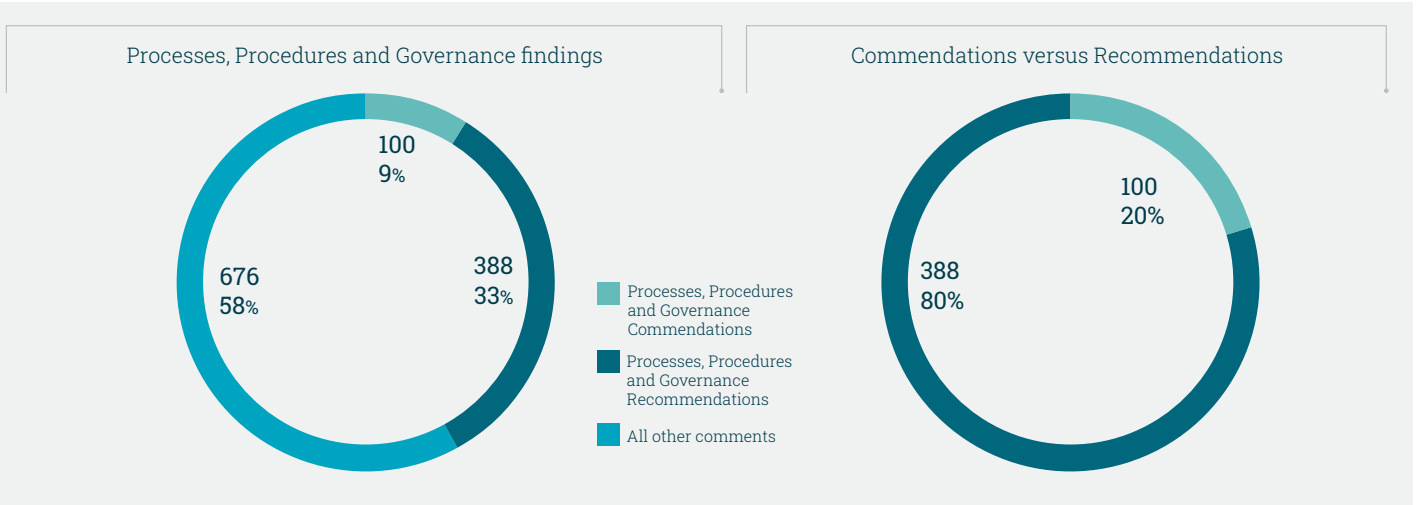
29 of these findings were deemed departmental, 7 institutional with 20 applicable to both.



7. Findings within Themes

7.11 PROCESSES, PROCEDURES AND GOVERNANCE

This was the most prevalent theme occurring within all 29 Internal Review Reports with 488 findings (42%) logged. 100 of these were commendations and 388 were recommendations.



Commendations:

Where schools or departments had implemented or maintained clear processes or procedures, these were commended by the reviewers noting the clarity and organisation they contributed to the department as a result of their existence. All findings here were similar, noting the clarity, efficiency, structure and employee/student satisfaction that is achieved as a result of effective processes and procedures in place.

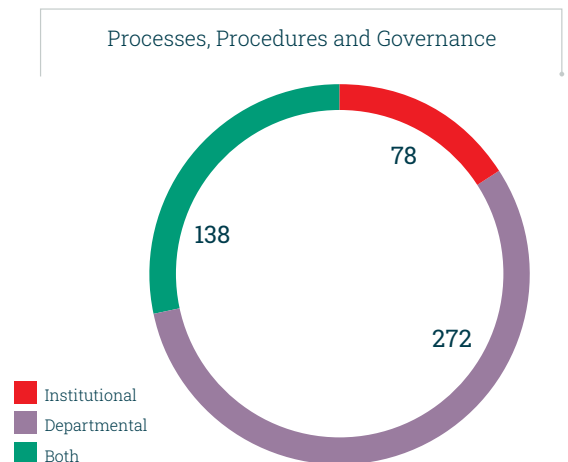
Recommendations:

33% of all recommendations over the 29 Internal Reviews fell under the theme “process/procedure/governance” highlighting this as a key area for quality enhancement within the organisation. Findings typically outlined mechanisms in which organisational practice could be better documented. An example of some of findings are as follows:

- A standard process should be introduced for...
- RCSI needs an institutional policy on...
- RCSI management needs to develop a policy on the overall management of...
- Clarify where responsibility lies for...
- Define the purpose, profile, attendance and structure to meetings undertaken by the Department...
- The development and implementation of a structured process for the monitoring and periodic review of...

Institutional versus departmental findings

272 of these findings were deemed departmental, 78 institutional with 138 overlaps occurring.



7. Findings within Themes

7.12 QUALITY ASSURANCE

382 findings (33%) were logged as applicable to quality assurance. 165 of these were commendations and 217 were recommendations.



Commendations:

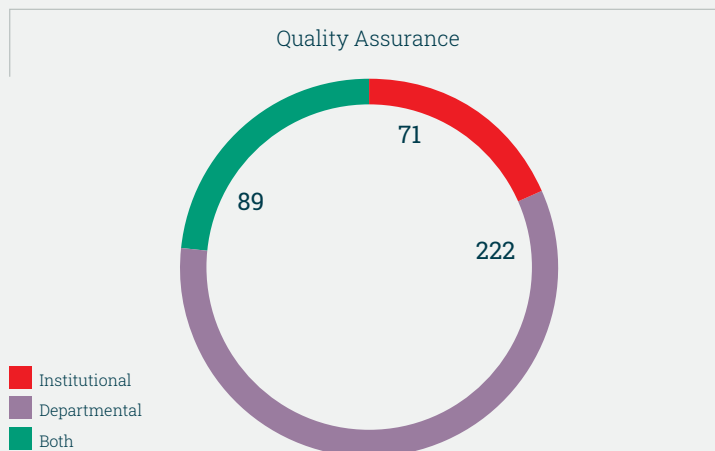
60% of commendations for quality assurance were linked to the service quality theme. Of the remaining 40% of findings, 37% were in relation to good process and procedures in place, resulting in excellent quality assurance, whilst the remaining 63% related to excellence in communication and engagement, staff development and commitments to continuous improvement and embedded quality practices and cultures.

Recommendations:

200 of the recommendations under quality assurance also related to process, procedures and governance. Whilst overall good practices and excellent service is noted within RCSI, the main recommendations relating to these topics is to formally document and embed these practices within the organisation so they are formally set out under a clear process, with an owner, procedure and review that happen automatically to ensure continuous improvement. The remaining recommendations were suggestions for new ways of improving and assuring quality.

Institutional versus departmental findings:

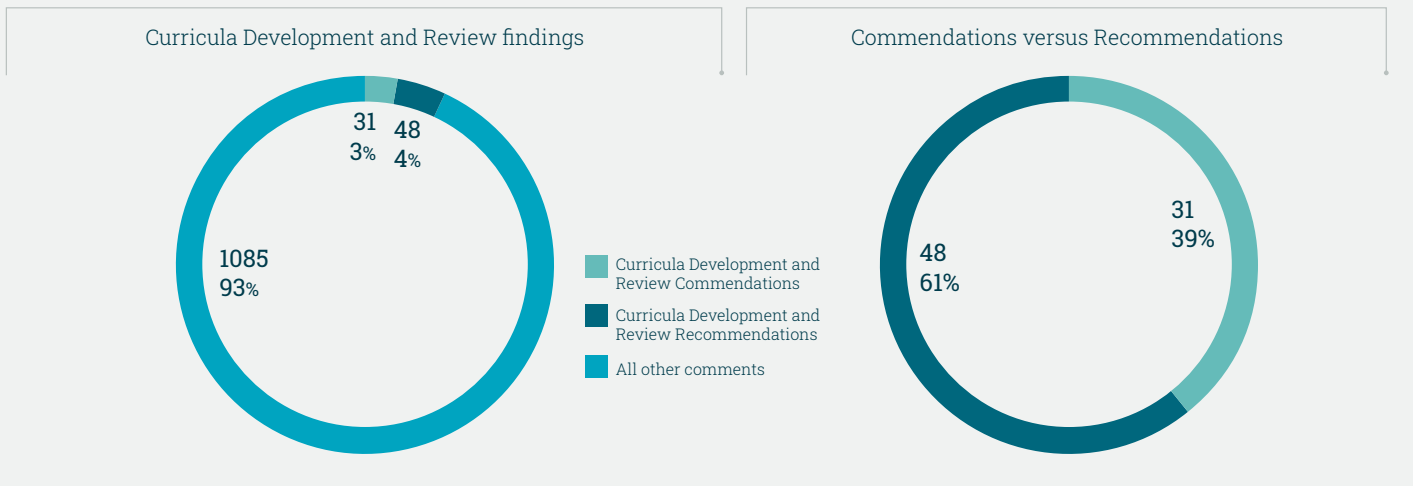
222 of these findings were deemed departmental, 71 institutional with 89 applicable to both.



7. Findings within Themes

7.13 CURRICULA DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW

79 findings (7%) were logged as applicable to curricula development and review. 31 of these were commendations and 48 were recommendations.



Commendations:

Schools were commended for stakeholder engagement in curriculum development and design, embedding of undergraduate research in curriculum, innovative training, staff appointments within curriculum management, curriculum focused on local's needs, engagement in external expertise and the ongoing and planned inclusion of students in curricula review.

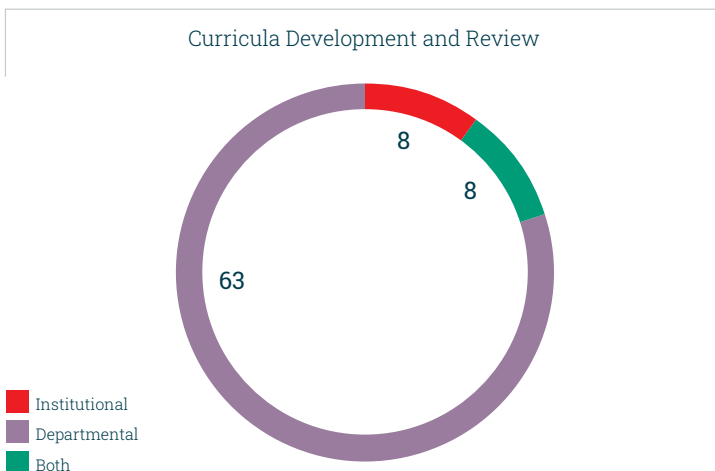
Recommendations:

All findings relating to this topic were within schools or overseas campus reports as would be expected. The exception to this rule were 3 findings, 1 relating to Student Services and 2 relating to the library which both recommend communication and support about curricula updates so they can both better provide their services accordingly.

An example of recommendations across the schools and campuses were relating to more stakeholder involvement and benchmarking exercises, consideration of alternative programme delivery options, scheduled programmatic reviews, inclusion of outreach programmes across all curricula in all campuses and feedback from alumni and students on curricula.

Institutional versus departmental findings:

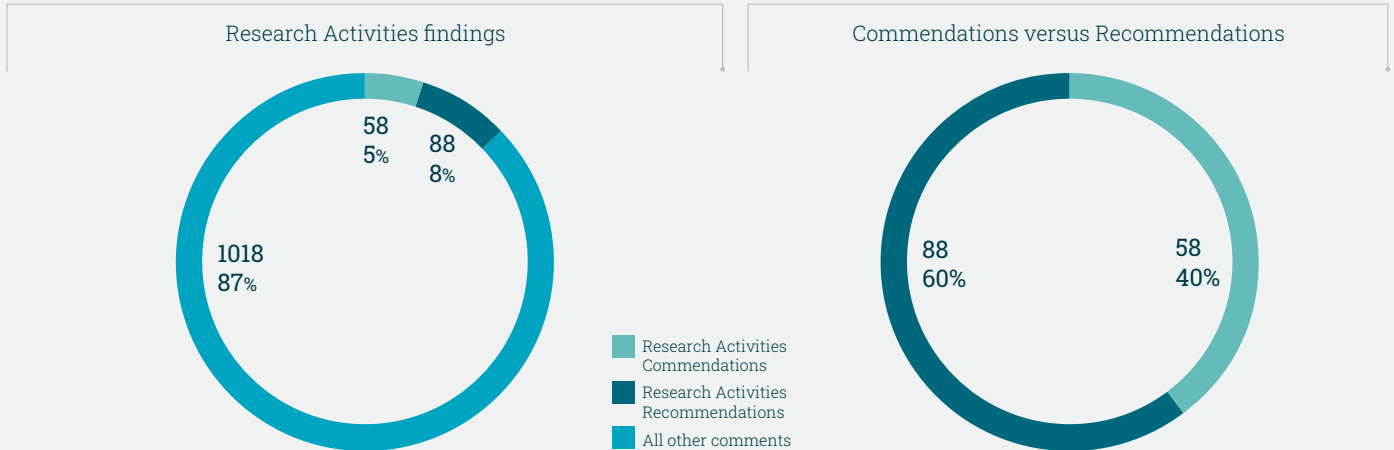
63 of these findings were deemed departmental, 8 institutional with 8 applicable to both.



7. Findings within Themes

7.14 RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

146 findings (12%) were logged as applicable to research activities. 58 of these were commendations and 88 were recommendations.



Commendations:

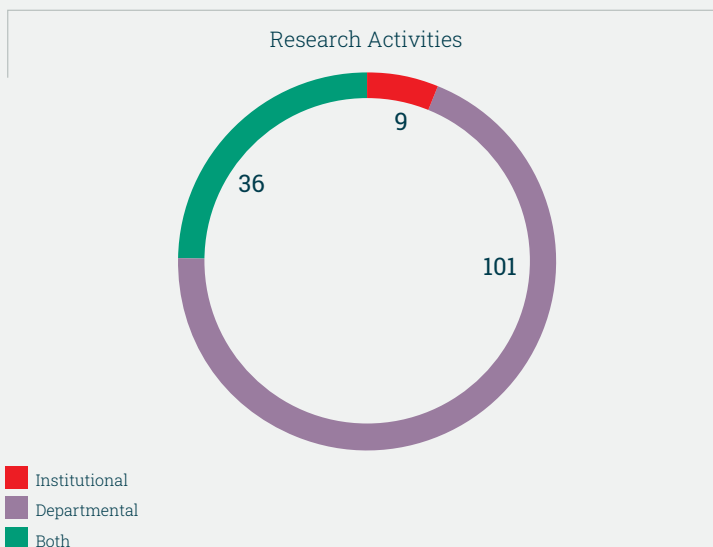
All commendations related to specific schools as well as the Office of Research and Innovation. Commendations included the research activities by staff, by the school, research success, embedding of research within curricula and research funding.

Recommendations:

Examples of the recommendations made were; the training needs of postgraduate researchers, encouragement of clinicians to take part in research, research infrastructure, support and encouragement of staff relating to research and publication, development and promotion of links with relevant research groups and further staff training relating to research.

Institutional versus departmental findings:

101 of these findings were deemed departmental, 9 institutional with 36 applicable to both.



8. Next Steps

This thematic analysis of Internal Quality Reviews has provided valuable insights into areas where RCSI is excelling and where further enhancement is possible. It is considered that the IQR process is successful with over 29 reviews completed for consideration as part of this analysis.

Upon conclusion of this analysis the QEO identified several areas for further progressing to maximise the learnings within this report:

- > Continuation of the process of tracking all subsequent IQR report findings against themes.
- > Review of the guidelines for units carrying out IQRs to bring greater consistency across all reports.
- > Revisions to peer review group guidance regarding the number of findings made in each review, highlighting of key findings, consideration of the impact of any previous reviews, and distinction between institutional level and departmental findings.
- > Further investigation of IQRs where 2 cycles of review have been conducted within units.
- > Further exploration of sub themes which could support greater knowledge sharing on best practice or opportunities for enhancement.



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