University College Dublin

REVIEW GROUP REPORT

Periodic Quality Review

UCD School of Medicine

July 2023

Accepted by the UCD Governing Authority at its meeting of 26 October 2023

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Summary Findings of the Review Group

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The Review Group has identified a number of key findings in relation to areas of good practice operating within the School and areas which the Review Group would highlight as requiring future improvement. The main section of this Report sets out all observations, commendations and recommendations of the Review Group in more detail.

Please note that the numbers below refer to the relevant paragraph in the body of the Report.

Examples of Good Practice

The Review Group identified a number of commendations, in particular:

2.12   The Review Group commends the School on its ongoing and productive engagement with the Irish Government and the Health Service Executive, in the service of the national need.

2.13   The Review Group commends the administrative and technical/professional support staff of the School, and their positive engagement with the new Student and Academic Services Review (SASR) structures and the job-sizing framework to the benefit of staff support and course provision.

2.15   The Review Group commends the School on the way in which it has begun to address accountability and sustainability in relation to School finances, though notes that ongoing work in this area is required.

3.23   The Review Group commends the School on its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the leading role it played nationally. The Review Group was particularly impressed with the minimal level of disruption to the student learning experience, in particular in relation to clinical practice.

3.24   The Review Group commends the School's postgraduate taught provision in the context of its civic mission to serve the professional and public needs of the population.

3.25   The Review Group commends the School on its high quality education, leading to successful graduates who have a national reputation for clinical excellence and translational science.

4.23   The Review Group commends the School for its cutting-edge research, which is also reflected in the high number of successful grant awards.

Recommendations for Future Improvement

The Review Group would suggest that the following recommendations be prioritised:

2.18   The Review Group recommends that the School develops a comprehensive staff development plan, to deliver on the School's Strategic Plan 2021-25 and the objectives relating to equality, diversity and inclusion.

2.23   The Review Group recommends that the School explores and develops a transparent plan with

the College and University stakeholders to address the capital and revenue funding needs for the School over the next seven years.

3.26   The Review Group recommends that the School strongly engage and prioritise the Student Voice by enhancing its current educational approach to quality assurance and evaluation. In doing so, the School should apply the principles of intersectionality to invest in the student support provision in the School. This approach recognises the diversity of the student body (neurodiversity, disability, international student community) and strengthens delivery of mental health services, better equipping the School's efforts for successful application for Athena Swan Silver Award in the future.

3.27   The Review Group recommends that the School urgently prioritises a medical curriculum and assessment review to meet the expectations of students, faculty, Health Service Executive and Irish Medical Council. This important undertaking would align with the College and University's vision and values for equitable and sustainable healthcare.

4.27   The Review Group recommends that the School engages and liaises with UCD Graduate Studies to examine how research students can be better supported both within and beyond their supervision arrangements. The School should also seriously consider introducing a specific postgraduate studies committee to enable significant improvements in the experience of graduate research students.

1. Introduction and Context

Introduction

1.1 This report presents the findings of the Periodic Quality Review of the UCD School of Medicine, University College Dublin, which was undertaken on 19-21 April 2023.

The Review Framework

1.2 Irish Universities have collectively agreed a framework for their quality review and quality improvement systems, which is consistent with both the legislative requirements of the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012*, and international good practice (e.g. *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2015*). Quality reviews are carried out in academic, administrative and support service units.

1.3 The purpose of Periodic Quality Review is to assist the University to assure itself of the quality of each of its constituent units, and to utilise learning from this developmental process in order to effect improvement, including:

- To monitor the quality of the student experience, and of teaching and learning.
- To monitor research activity, including management of research activity; and assessing the research performance with regard to research productivity, research income, and recruiting and supporting doctoral students.
- To identify, encourage and disseminate good practice, and to identify challenges and how to address these.
- To provide an opportunity for units to test the effectiveness of their systems and procedures for monitoring and enhancing quality and standards.
- To encourage the development and enhancement of these systems, in the context of current and emerging provision.
- To inform the University's strategic planning process.
- The output report provides robust evidence for external accreditation bodies.
- The process provides an external benchmark on practice and curriculum.
- To provide public information on the University's capacity to assure the quality and standards of its awards. The University's implementation of its quality procedures enables it to demonstrate how it discharges its responsibilities for assuring the quality and standards of its awards, as required by the *Universities Act 1997* and the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012*.

The Review Process

1.4 Typically, the review model comprises four major elements:

- Preparation of a Self-Assessment Report (SAR);
- A visit by a Review Group that includes UCD staff and external experts, both national and international. The site visit normally will take place over a two or three day period;
- Preparation of a Review Group Report that is made public;

- Agreement of an action plan for improvement (Quality Improvement Plan) based on the Review Group Report's recommendations. The University will also monitor progress against the Quality Improvement Plan.

Full details of the review process can be found on the UCD Quality Office website: www.ucd.ie/quality.

The Review Group

1.5   The composition of the Review Group for the quality review of the UCD School of Medicine was as follows:

- An tOllamh Regina Uí Chollatáin, Dean and College Principal, UCD College of Arts and Humanities (Chair)
- Dr. Gavin Stewart, Assistant Professor, UCD School of Biology and Environmental Science (Deputy Chair)
- Professor Arunthathi Mahendran, Director of the Institute of Health Sciences Education, Queen Mary University of London (UK)
- Professor Steve Riley, Head of School and Dean of Medicine, Cardiff University (UK)

1.6   In addition to the Self-Assessment Report, the Review Group considered documentation provided by the School and the University during the site visit. The review site visit schedule is included as Appendix 2.

1.7   This Review Group Report has been read and approved by all members of the Review Group.

Preparation of the Self-Assessment Report (SAR)

1.8   In February 2022, the Quality Office met with the Head of School and the School Quality Review Project Team to discuss the Quality Review process. The Project Team met on a monthly basis during the period February to December 2022. It liaised with the Quality Office throughout the self-assessment process, providing nominees for external reviewers, proposing dates for the site visit and sharing drafts of the emerging Self-Assessment Report (SAR).

1.9   The School established a Coordinating Committee. A total of six meetings of the Coordinating Committee were held during the period May to February 2022. This group was invited to contribute to, and comment on, drafts of the SAR during all stages of its preparation. Documentation (including all drafts of the SAR) was shared with the Coordinating Committee via Google Drive.

1.10   Ten question SWOT Analysis surveys were prepared for both staff and students and circulated by email to both groups. The results of these surveys informed the SAR.

1.11   The draft SAR was sent to the Quality Office on 18 November 2022. Feedback was provided to the School on the SAR, and the final, updated version of the SAR was received by the Quality Office on 10 March 2023.

The University

1.12   University College Dublin (UCD) is a large and diverse university whose origins date back to 1854. The University is situated on a large modern campus about 4 km to the south of the centre of Dublin.

1.13   The University Strategic Plan (to 2024) states that the University's mission is: "to contribute to the flourishing of Dublin, Ireland, Europe and the world through the excellence and impact of our research and scholarship, the quality of our graduates and our national and global engagement; providing a supportive community in which every member of the University is enabled to achieve their full potential".

1.14   The University is currently organised into six Colleges and 37 Schools:

- UCD College of Arts and Humanities
- UCD College of Business
- UCD College of Engineering and Architecture
- UCD College of Health and Agricultural Sciences
- UCD College of Social Sciences and Law
- UCD College of Science

1.15   As one of the largest universities on the island of Ireland, UCD supports a broad, deep and rich academic community in Science, Business, Engineering, Health Sciences, Agriculture, Veterinary Medicine, Arts, Law, Celtic Studies and Human Sciences. There are currently more than 26,000 students in our UCD campus (approximately 16,300 undergraduates, 7,800 postgraduates and 2,200 Occasional and Adult Education students) registered on over 70 University degree programmes, including over 6,300 international students from more than 121 countries. The University also has over 5,400 students studying UCD degree programmes on campuses overseas.

UCD School of Medicine

1.16   The UCD School of Medicine offers an extensive portfolio of research, education, and training programmes, and these programmes are delivered by research-active academic staff within modern health science facilities and by experienced clinicians across the country's largest clinical training network.

1.17   The School delivers over fifty graduate taught programmes ranging from certificate to Masters degree awards that are offered on a full-time, part-time, occasional and distance learning basis to support continuous professional development.

1.18   The School is a research-intensive School with a large portfolio of biomedical, clinical, and translational research led by 155 principal investigators with grants under management worth approximately €110 million and annual research income of approximately €20 million per annum. Over 200 graduate students pursue research degrees at Masters or Doctoral level. Many of these undertake this research during their higher specialist training or while employed as a clinical tutor to undergraduate students.

1.19   The School's clinical training programmes are delivered at six major Dublin teaching hospitals and across the country through twenty-five affiliated acute, general or specialist hospitals, and across the primary care clinical training network. An additional fourteen private clinical centres support Radiography training nationwide.

1.20   The School is a principal stakeholder in Ireland's premier biomedical research institute, the UCD Conway Institute for Biomolecular and Biomedical Research which is focused on developing a better understanding of the causes of disease, simpler and more reliable diagnostic tests, and more effective treatments. It is home to the state-of-the-art UCD Systems Biology Ireland initiative which seeks to evaluate new therapeutic approaches through a combination of computational modelling and detailed understanding of cellular signalling networks. The School hosts the UCD Charles Institute, Ireland's first research centre focused on dermatology and skin cancer education and research and is home to the UCD Diabetes Complications Research Centre, a multidisciplinary research group focused on macrovascular complications of diabetes and obesity.

1.21   Other research centres within the School include the Centre for Experimental Pathogen Host Research, the Academic Centre on Rare Diseases, the Centres for Human Reproduction, UCD Perinatal Research Centre, the Centre for Bioinformatics, the Centre for Arthritis Research and the Centre for Precision Surgery. The UCD Clinical Research Centre is the School's state-of-the-art clinical research centre which leads on the School's ambition of delivering high quality, impactful, world class and most importantly, patient-centred research.

1.22   The School is a large and geographically dispersed unit with over 516 staff and 860 adjunct staff based in five locations on the UCD Belfield campus, at six principal clinical sites and thirty other specialist clinical sites.

1.23   The School is led by the Head of School who is also Dean of Medicine. The Dean is supported by six Associate Deans, six Academic Section Leaders, sixteen Heads of Subject, and nine Directors of Functions. The Head of School is Chair of the School Executive Management Committee and Chair of the Medicine Programmes Board. Academic staff are organised by Section and Subject Areas, research staff operate within research centres, and professional (administrative and technical) staff managed within defined teams. A 22-person School Executive Management Committee (School Executive) with representation from each Academic Section, Senior Research Leaders and Directors of Function typically meets monthly. The College Director of Finance and HR Partner are also members of this committee.

1.24   The School Staff Profile is outlined in section 3.8 of the SAR, where the overall Staff Headcount and FTEs by Staff Type is provided as follows:

Category	1st March 2015		1st March 2022		% Change	
	Headcount	FTE's	Headcount	FTE's	Headcount	FTE's
Academic Staff	175	146.4	202	153.3	15%	5%
Research Staff	161	141.3	216	163.6	34%	16%
Support Staff	94	86.4	98	90.0	4%	4%
Total Staff	430	374.1	516	407.0	20%	9%

1.25   Approximately 34% of students (over 1,000) are international students comprising 85 different nationalities. School staff are equally diverse with 150 individuals (33% of total staff) comprising 45 nationalities.

1.26   Since the previous quality review, the gender profile of School staff remains largely unchanged (61% Female; 39% Male) with academic staff continuing to be gender balanced (54% Female; 46% Male). In September 2019, the School was awarded a Departmental Bronze Athena Swan Award, and in April 2023, the School will renew their Bronze Award.

1.27   This is the School's third external review under the current University quality assurance process. In addition to these periodic quality reviews, the School and its educational programmes also undergo frequent external appraisal, and these are typically conducted by professional bodies (e.g., Medical Council of Ireland, CORU (the Regulator for Health and Social Care Professionals), Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council, among others).

2. Organisation, Management and Staffing of the School

General Comments and Context

2.1   The School has engaged constructively with this periodic quality review. The Review Group was pleased to have the opportunity to meet and have productive dialogue with so many School stakeholders.

2.2   The School leadership is strong with a clearly defined structure of governance and reporting necessary for a School of this size.

2.3   Staff relations are positive with open communication practices. The roles and workloads of Associate Deans are central to the working model of the School.

2.4   The 2019 Bronze Athena Swan Award is being followed with a four year action plan with a view to renewing the award in 2023, although promotion applications remain low with three staff promoted to Full Professor (male) and two promoted to Professor (female) over the last six years.

2.5   The School has a clear vision with a complex range of programmes and associated stakeholders with consideration of projected growth in student numbers to meet the professional needs of the Irish healthcare system. Students are supported by the country's largest clinical facility comprising 600 consultants, 150 General Medical Practitioners and 38 Radiographers or medical imaging staff.

2.6   The promotion routes for joint clinical-academic appointees are similar to full time University academic staff. No data was presented on the numbers of promotion applications or the success rate for jointly appointed clinical-academics.

2.7   The research portfolio of biomedical, clinical and translational research, led by 155 principal investigators with grants worth approximately €110 million and an annual research income of approximately €20 million, is a noteworthy flagship of the School's work and progress. This relies significantly on positive and consistent engagement with internal and external stakeholders with the principal investigators and PhD researchers at the core of that engagement.

2.8   The School has followed the last periodic quality review recommendations in relation to School recruitment to support teaching and research missions, while also progressing a portfolio of new senior clinician appointments to expand the clinical capacity and developing structures for administrative staff.

2.9   The technical support staff in the School have an important role to play in the day to day management of systems and procedures. Mainly as a result of contractual issues the system for technical support staff is unwieldy, resulting in a lack of morale among this staff cohort.

2.10   Despite the scale and quality of facilities for campus teaching, the growth in the School's educational activity means that new investment is a priority. The Capital Investment Plan has not been developed and will be central to the future progression and vision for the School.

Commendations

2.11   The School's sustained and admirable commitment to students and academic programmes during the COVID-19 pandemic is to be commended; the School's leadership of the country's response to the pandemic with minimum disruption to student learning demonstrates an unparalleled commitment to Irish healthcare from staff and students.

2.12   The Review Group commends the School on its ongoing and productive engagement with the Irish Government and the Health Service Executive, in the service of the national need.

2.13   The Review Group commends the administrative and technical/professional support staff of the School, and their positive engagement with the new Student and Academic Services Review (SASR) structures and the job-sizing framework to the benefit of staff support and course provision.

2.14   The School approach has resulted in 13 Professional and Administrative Support managers now reporting to the Director. The upgrading of 19 Administrative and Professional staff since 2020 via the job-sizing framework is to be commended.

2.15   The Review Group commends the School on the way in which it has begun to address accountability and sustainability in relation to School finances, though notes that ongoing work in this area is required.

2.16   The growth and development of the Radiography and Diagnostic Imaging group is an innovative and progressive addition to the specialist education provided and has increased the professional development within this area in the context of staff profile and a greater contribution in improving the Irish healthcare system.

2.17   The School manages its space for research and development with due consideration for areas of specialisation for students.

Recommendations

2.18   The Review Group recommends that the School develops a comprehensive staff development plan, to deliver on the School's Strategic Plan 2021-25 and the objectives relating to equality, diversity and inclusion.

2.19   The Review Group strongly recommends an agreed plan for the support and promotion of all staff, drawing on best practice from across the University including Performance for Growth (P4G) and Athena Swan review. This should be accompanied by a clear process for monitoring and review within the School's Quality Improvement Plan.

2.20   The Review Group recommends that the School urgently addresses the gender inequality at senior academic ranks. An important initial step is implementation of a mentoring scheme with intersectional engagement. This approach would encourage promotion applications at all levels of the faculty development framework. A second step is to explore the ratio of clinical staff to academic staff workloads with the aim of ensuring an equitable approach to promotions.

2.21   The Review Group recommends that the School establishes a steering committee (or similar task and finish group) to consider the education and training needs of the Clinical Academic workforce. This is an urgent area of consideration for the School as it addresses succession planning for the Faculty and implications for streamlining and quality assuring the education that students receive on placement.

2.22   The Review Group recommends that opportunities for progression for technical support staff is considered within the School's staff planning.

2.23   The Review Group recommends that the School explores and develops a transparent plan with the College and University stakeholders to address the capital and revenue funding needs for the School over the next seven years.

3.   Quality of Programmes and Student Learning Experience

General Comments and Context

3.1   The School has well established programmes in undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research domains.

3.2   Since the last periodic quality review there has been a significant increase in student numbers driven by Irish Governmental policy, Health Service demand and financial requirements.

3.3   Within the School there is a strong sense of civic mission with some programmes delivered to enhance the Health Service development for excellent patient care.

3.4   The Review Group observed that students appear to have a strong sense of loyalty to their programmes whilst not necessarily identifying with the School of Medicine.

3.5   The faculty are dedicated, supportive and committed to teaching but recognise the impact of the increasing student numbers on the wider productivity of the School.

3.6   The wider College support teams recognise the potential within the School but are sometimes frustrated in trying to communicate and gain traction around campus-wide initiatives.

3.7   There has been a 40% increase in the total number of students since the previous periodic quality review.

3.8   Whilst staff headcount has increased by 20% over this period this only represents a 9% increase in FTE – with the biggest increase noted in research staff.

3.9   It was not clear to the Review Group if the expanded student numbers have been appropriately resourced and supported by a commensurate investment in student services such as student support.

3.10   Student support provision appears to be under increasing pressure. Students value the current provision but it is under-resourced given the evidence of worsening mental health in some students post-pandemic.

3.11   Both student and staff diversity has increased since the previous periodic quality review.

3.12   The Review Group heard evidence that the pandemic mitigations were delivered exceptionally well from a student perspective.

3.13   Triangulation of quality data with stakeholder opinion by the Review Group confirms excellent graduates that are well thought of in the postgraduate environment.

3.14   The sample of data provided on student performance for the Medicine programmes is reassuring. The Review Group would encourage the School to consider the assessment data in the context of the award gap discrepancy observed in minority ethnic groups that is evident in other institutions. There does need to be caution given the small numbers of students in the cohorts both in terms of ensuring inadvertent identification of individual students through

published data and the effect of small numbers on the interpretation of data. A proactive approach to monitoring of student performance data by demographic would be a prudent addition to data monitoring and EDI agenda.

3.15   The postgraduate taught programmes have undertaken review and enhancement activity to ensure that they remain relevant and fit for purpose seeking to identify economies of scale across multiple modules where possible.

3.16   The Radiography programme has embraced technology introducing high fidelity and digital simulation to enhance the student learning experience.

3.17   The Medicine curriculum has been in place since 2008 and whilst there have been modifications and attempts to modernise, there has not been a root and branch review despite significant changes in the context (increased student numbers, HSE geographical review, post-pandemic education, medical education and assessment pedagogical changes). Curriculum review must incorporate the Student Voice as a critical part of the process.

3.18   The Irish Medical Council in 2020-21 recommended reviewing and changing the assessment burden (modality of assessment as well as load). It was noted from student feedback that assessments still require attention with a current focus on assessment *of* learning rather than *for* learning.

3.19   The Review Group felt that the University Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), Brightspace, was not being utilised to its full potential. Blended learning has accelerated as a result of COVID and when used correctly can improve student accessibility to learning material, particularly for those students from more diverse backgrounds.

3.20   Blended learning has the potential to facilitate flexibility in how students learn and when. This could attract more widening participation students, and mature access students, which aligns with the wish to create a doctor population that reflects the make-up of the general population.

3.21   Irish Medical Council accreditation was noted by the Review Group, demonstrating continued quality provision of the curriculum. However, there is evidence within the detail that triangulates the need to ensure the curriculum remains fit for purpose.

3.22   The recommendations of the Review Group focus on UCD's four strategic themes as well as the objectives set by the School of Medicine. As such, these are intended to help the School align with the University and College's overall vision and values.

Commendations

3.23   The Review Group commends the School on its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the leading role it played nationally. The Review Group was particularly impressed with the minimal level of disruption to the student learning experience, in particular in relation to clinical practice.

3.24   The Review Group commends the School's postgraduate taught provision in the context of its civic mission to serve the professional and public needs of the population.

3.25   The Review Group commends the School on its high quality education, leading to successful graduates who have a national reputation for clinical excellence and translational science.

Recommendations

3.26   The Review Group recommends that the School strongly engage and prioritise the Student Voice by enhancing its current educational approach to quality assurance and evaluation. In doing so, the School should apply the principles of intersectionality to invest in the student support provision in the School. This approach recognises the diversity of the student body (neurodiversity, disability, international student community) and strengthens delivery of mental health services, better equipping the School's efforts for successful application for Athena Swan Silver Award in the future.

3.27   The Review Group recommends that the School urgently prioritises a medical curriculum and assessment review to meet the expectations of students, faculty, Health Service Executive and Irish Medical Council. This important undertaking would align with the College and University's vision and values for equitable and sustainable healthcare.

3.28   The Review Group noted comments on access to cadaveric specimens for anatomy teaching, and as such, it recommends the exploration of evidence-based pedagogies such as how anatomy teaching can be enhanced with the use of VR (which creates a 'live anatomy' learning experience) or the use of cross-sectional imaging in collaboration with Radiography.

3.29   The Review Group recommends a strategic approach to student evaluation and feedback, grounding teaching and assessment practices in modern evidence-based pedagogies, working with students to create effective online materials that strengthen clinical learning and understanding of practice. This should maximise the use of the VLE (Brightspace) to improve learning access for all students. A similar recommendation in this regard was made during the last review but it was unclear to the Review Group whether any progress has been made.

3.30   The Review Group noted the faculty's concerns regarding lecture capture but recommends a review to optimise the use of Brightspace and develop specific online content to enhance and strengthen learning (e.g. the use of online platforms to deliver and complement neurology teaching was an example of good practice). This has the potential to achieve strategic objectives such as expanded student numbers, whilst ensuring high quality learning experiences across the cohort.

3.31   The Review Group recommends that the School prioritise student engagement by empowering students to take responsibility for their learning and drive constructive change to the learning experience at both the micro and macro level. To foster student engagement, the School will need to be responsive, close the feedback loop and ensure student representatives on various committees are clear on the solutions provided to the issues being raised.

3.32   The Review Group recommends that the School engages pro-actively with the impending geographic changes to healthcare delivery in Ireland to ensure the positive student experience is maintained. This may require a review and formalisation of agreements with local health providers for clinical placements.

3.33   The Review Group recommends that the School increases its VLE use (e.g. Brightspace) in both teaching and assessment. Importantly, it should extensively engage with the students in these developments to understand their specific needs and requirements.

4.   Quality of Postgraduate Research Education and Research Activity

General Comments and Context

4.1   The School Research Strategy is clear and prioritises research excellence.

4.2   Research grant income is excellent and on an increasing trajectory.

4.3   There is increasing diversity within the research student community being realised through an increase in non-EU students.

4.4   Significant collaborations exist with research groups across UCD fostering interdisciplinary science and creating opportunities for future funding.

4.5   The UCD Clinical Research Facility Reports demonstrate successful growth in clinical studies, infrastructure provision and translational medicine opportunities.

4.6   The research institutes provide a vibrant infrastructure for researchers and students but there appears to be a tendency to operate in isolation with limited opportunity for students to interact with students from other groups or institutes.

4.7   The laboratory space observed by the Review Group was of high quality and well managed by the core support staff.

4.8   Whilst the provision of research laboratory space is successfully managed with a model based upon research need, the core services funding model may be challenging to reconcile as equipment infrastructure grows and service contracts require renewal.

4.9   The number of graduate research students has remained broadly similar over the period since the last quality review but with some fluctuation in the number of registrations by programme.

4.10   There has been a further widening of the gender balance amongst the research students with 62% of students being female - this will need consideration for future Athena Swan applications, and for the future pipeline of tenured researchers. This may create an opportunity to redress the gender imbalance at full professorial level.

4.11   Research students are, on the whole, satisfied with the student experience with good support offered by principal investigators. However, there is variability in the level of approachability of principal investigators and this can increase the time required by some researchers in dealing with support for and concerns raised by the students.

4.12   The UCD PGR Student Survey 2021 triangulates well with the information that the Review Group obtained during the site visit. Whilst there is a lot to be commended there are opportunities to improve the student experience and support the postgraduate research students during their research period. Considered analysis and review of the survey data, in collaboration with postgraduate research students, could provide excellent benefits for the School.

4.13   There were some concerns raised about research supervision, particularly if there was a dispute between student and supervisor. The Research Supervisory Panel incorporated the student's own supervisor which can make dispute identification and resolution challenging. The Review Group recognised that there were pro's and con's associated with the model of research supervision but felt that this should be raised with the School for consideration.

4.14   The inability to formalise co-supervision of PhDs by the University is seen as an issue and can hinder student progress. Students would benefit from extra support and could address disputes if there was co-supervision.

4.15   Early career researchers would benefit from formal recognition within the supervisory process in terms of personal and career development.

4.16   Identifying ways to include adjunct researchers, particularly from the clinical services, would facilitate translational research fostering a stronger collaboration with the Health Services.

4.17   The scheme that funds research students to undertake a postgraduate research degree whilst doing demonstrating work is applauded, however there are concerns that these students fall between two processes - Human Resources and Research Student services. This was a particular issue during COVID but should be considered for review in the light of the issues raised.

4.18   Whilst there are mechanisms for students to raise concerns this is not widely recognised, leading to fear of negative repercussions from staff should students identify and report an issue.

4.19   With increasing numbers of Non-EU students extra thought should be given to the support services that these students require.

4.20   The current economic crisis, multiplied as a result of the Dublin cost of living, is causing real concern for students and supervisors alike. Stipend provision has not increased but rental accommodation is becoming increasingly difficult in Dublin requiring a concerted effort to address the issues.

4.21   Student demonstrators are a positive step in education provision but need timely access to timetables and training for the delivery of the sessions assigned. There is a reliance on senior demonstrators to provide support within this area. Postgraduate research students would value the opportunity to lecture as well as undertake small group activity.

4.22   Research integrity and culture are discussed within the SAR but this was not a prominent feature during the Review Group site visit.

Commendations

4.23   The Review Group commends the School for its cutting-edge research, which is also reflected in the high number of successful grant awards.

4.24   The Review Group commends the School for its successful Research Institute structure with the provision of high quality research space for principal investigators and research teams.

4.25   The Review Group commends the School for maintaining postgraduate research student numbers during a challenging period that incorporated the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recommendations

4.26   The Review Group recommends that the School prioritises research integrity and culture through its strategy, Shaping the Future - led by the Senior Team and empowering the Research Integrity Champions to ensure that all staff appreciate the importance of a positive research environment.

4.27   The Review Group recommends that the School engages and liaises with UCD Graduate Studies to examine how research students can be better supported both within and beyond their supervision arrangements. The School should also seriously consider introducing a specific postgraduate studies committee to enable significant improvements in the experience of graduate research students.

4.28   The Review Group recommends a review of research supervision to establish the most effective model to address concerns raised by students and researchers. This should seek to learn from best practice of student support, inform the need for co-supervision and address mechanisms to involve adjunct supervisors from the clinical services.

4.29   The Review Group recommends that the School engages with UCD Human Resources to clarify the relevant processes for, and status of, postgraduate research students also employed as demonstrators.

4.30   The Review Group recommends that the School establishes formal recognition of the student voice, and seeks to close the student feedback loop with regard to past and future survey data. The School should define the process by which the student voice is captured, reported and acted upon (where appropriate) within the School.

4.31   The Review Group recommends a review of student financial support, PhD stipends, housing etc, to recognise and address ongoing concerns around the cost of living within Dublin.

5.   Management of Quality and Enhancement

General Comments and Context

5.1   The Review Group observed that there was a clear statement of processes regarding use of student feedback and external examiners for module enhancement. Although minimal documentation was initially provided in the SAR, extensive information was provided on request during the site visit.

5.2   Detailed information was provided on the organisational structure of the School which is essential when addressing quality management in such a large school. The aims for making advances in quality of teaching and research are also clearly stated.

5.3   The use of team building events, hybrid working, research integrity champions and liaison committees (including the newly formed Medicine Student Engagement Forum) all indicate a strong commitment to enhancing the working environment for staff and students alike.

5.4   The School correctly identified the opportunity for a better connection between the Performance for Growth (P4G) annual review process, the workload model and the promotion system. Rates of P4G completion and promotion application within the School were noted to be significantly below those typically observed across UCD.

5.5   Research integrity training is being provided for the future generation of researchers being trained within the School, though there appears to be little focus on current staff.

5.6   Whilst most of the staff are generally well supported, this does not appear to be the case for the technical support staff who perform such a vital role within the School.

Commendations

5.7   Student data provided by the School illustrates that graduates are consistently achieving high levels of academic success. Crucially, degree classifications have been confirmed as wholly appropriate by all external examiner reports.

5.8   There are numerous examples of the School's staff engaging with UCD Teaching and Learning, both in terms of professional development and improvements in general teaching practices (e.g. assessment strategies).

5.9   The School has clearly demonstrated the ability to make large-scale structural changes when required (e.g. the new administrative organisational structure has been extremely successful and very appreciated by the staff involved).

5.10   There is a demonstrable willingness to listen to all stakeholders in efforts to enhance the quality of everything that the School does, as illustrated by the current survey of postdoctoral staff.

Recommendations

5.11 The School should review the diversity of its assessment strategies across undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Future diversification of the student body should be reflected by a move away from over reliance on traditional assessment strategies, such as face-to-face MCQ examinations.

5.12 Consideration needs to be given to developing a stronger culture for educational scholarship within the School. For example, efforts should be made to strongly encourage and reward publication of research in educational journals to better reflect some of the great advances being made.

5.13 The School must address the lack of support for the technical support staff if it is not to jeopardize their essential work. As well as the critical need for additional officers and making all current officers permanent staff, creation of a Chief Technical Officer position within the School would also be highly appropriate. Such an appointment would not only be in line with other schools across UCD, it has been shown to be a highly effective strategy already within the School (i.e. administrative director).

5.14 The specific career development of postdoctoral staff would be greatly enhanced if they were given more opportunities to teach within the School.

6.   Support Services

General Comments and Context

6.1   The School has strong working relationships with all of the support services that they regularly engage with (e.g. a dedicated room allocation contact person has been organised, which has proven to be successful in improving the efficiency of the room booking system).

6.2   Very good student support systems are in place, but there may be an issue regarding the need for a more proactive approach in certain areas. This is indicated by the fact that most of the attendees to meetings with the student support officer are Stage 1 undergraduates, rather than later stages or postgraduate students.

6.3   With the increased student numbers across the University, effective timetabling of teaching has become more problematic as pressure on UCD Estate Services grows. This is particularly an issue for large, early stage undergraduate lectures which can have over 300 students.

6.4   Severe challenges have occurred with regards to post-award support for researchers who have successfully obtained funding. Whilst this is a common problem across UCD, it has particularly dire consequences for the School which contains numerous clinical researchers who are often relatively unfamiliar with UCD systems.

Commendations

6.5   Support service stakeholders all commented that their interactions with the School were overwhelmingly positive, stating that they were a pleasure to work with.

6.6   Praise for the exceptional role played by the School's student advisor was forthcoming from various student groups.

Recommendations

6.7   The Review Group recommends that the School urgently engages with UCD Research regarding the inadequate availability of post-award support and, if necessary, consider funding of a local solution (e.g. creating an additional administrative position to deal with these challenges).

6.8   The Review Group recommends that the School prioritises the hiring of an additional student advisor. This will ensure that current excellent standards of student support are maintained with ever increasing demands from the expanding student community.

6.9   Some support services have previously been required to engage with the School on multiple occasions when new developments occur (e.g. the introduction of the new grade input system). The Review Group recommends that the School improves communication across the School to prevent this unnecessary increase in workload for support service teams.

6.10   To improve engagement with widening participation students, the Review Group recommends that the School makes greater use of IT support services and technology (e.g. increased use of lecture recordings). Additionally, more online materials in the form of short 5-10 minute video

clips would help all students in both their revision and deeper understanding of subject material.

6.11   The Review Group recommends that there be greater inclusion of support service teams in the day-to-day running of the School (e.g. the UCD Library does not have representation on any School educational committees) and involvement of support services would be very beneficial in any future curriculum review.

7.   External Relations

General Comments and Context

7.1   Since the previous periodic quality review, the College structure has radically changed which has been welcome by the School of Medicine. In this current structure, the Head of School is represented at the College Executive and the Associate Deans participate in College-level committees relevant to their domains. This arrangement has provided great transparency and autonomy for individual schools.

7.2   The School collaborates with other Schools (including Computer Science, Mathematics and Science, Biomolecular and Biomedical Sciences) across UCD to create and deliver its undergraduate and postgraduate programmes as well as research projects.

7.3   The School engages with wider University services such as UCD Teaching and Learning to provide training for its educators and student support for the pastoral care of its undergraduate students in particular. There are tensions given that a School of this size has to share these central services with other schools who may have a smaller demand.

7.4   The relationship with Hospital partners who deliver clinical training is mediated by a few central individuals who have established strong personal relationships with these providers. It was not clear to the Review Group how the interests and strategic objectives of the School and Hospitals can be aligned to create reliable and sustainable partnerships of mutual benefit.

7.5   Clinical academics from partner Hospitals are appointed on joint contracts which require significant funding from the School to resource these key appointments.

7.6   Since 2008, the School has established training relationships with over 140 General Practices across the region. Ongoing investment into the growth of these networks is critical if the School is to expand student numbers.

7.7   The School prides itself on interaction and engagement with the Health Service Executive through different initiatives including the Health and Social Care Professions Education and Development Sub-Committee which helps the School to advance their ambitions for clinical education.

7.8   The School's Radiography and Diagnostic Imaging section has similarly developed key relationships with the Health Service Executive and Faculty of Radiologists, to name two, which helps the School's strategic plans in this area of study and training.

Commendations

7.9   The Review Group commends the School on its civic mission and public engagement activity in regard to its delivery of postgraduate taught programmes and its response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

7.10   The Review Group commends the School on its strong collaborative links with other Schools within the University.

7.11   The Review Group commends the School for its support of its faculty with roles that are external to the School.

7.12   The Review Group commends Radiography for its response to the need for increased student numbers and its relationship with CORU.

Recommendations

7.13   The Review Group recommends a review of international links with regard to research and education. The School could consider formalisation of some international strategic links for future benefit.

7.14   The Review Group recommends consideration of a communications strategy that takes account of internal and external stakeholder needs. This should include links with the Research Institutes, Hospital sites and GP practices.

UCD School of Medicine
Response to the Review Group Report

The School sincerely thanks the External Review Group for their considered and constructive report, and for giving generously of their time to conduct the recent site visit. We accept their report without qualification.

As a School that is committed to continuous improvement and that is subject to frequent external accreditation reviews, we commit ourselves to incorporating their recommendations into our integrated School plan. This composite plan combines the School's strategic plan implementation, actions arising from external accreditation of our programmes and our Athena SWAN action plan.

We appreciate the Review Group's generous commendation of the many strengths of our School and take this opportunity to thank our staff for consistently delivering these achievements.

Comments on Principal Recommendations

1. *The Review Group recommends that the School develops a comprehensive staff development plan, to deliver on the School's Strategic Plan 2021-25 and the objectives relating to equality, diversity and inclusion.*

    The School is happy to articulate a comprehensive staff development plan to guide the implementation of our Strategic Plan and deliver our Athena SWAN / EDI ambitions.

2. *The Review Group recommends that the School explores and develops a transparent plan with the College and University stakeholders to address the capital and revenue funding needs for the School over the next seven years.*

    With the support of the College Director of Finance, the School will engage with the various University stakeholders with the aim of developing a transparent multi annual financial plan that provides for the School's capital and infrastructural funding requirements, in addition to planning for the School's operational priorities.

3. *The Review Group recommends that the School strongly engage and prioritise the Student Voice by enhancing its current educational approach to quality assurance and evaluation. In doing so, the School should apply the principles of intersectionality to invest in the student support provision in the School. This approach recognises the diversity of the student body (neurodiversity, disability, international student community) and strengthens delivery of mental health services, better equipping the School's efforts for successful application for Athena Swan Silver Award in the future.*

    The School is happy to embrace the spirit of this recommendation. Our students are more than consumers of our programmes. Their insights and observations can help the School deliver an excellent student experience and ensure that we equip these future healthcare and science professionals are the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to be successful in their career. The Review Group are prescient in identifying the principles of intersectionality in student support matters. Although the School has introduced many initiatives to address specific student needs, the

development of a comprehensive student engagement plan will help integrate these various initiatives to greater impact. We hope that the recent appointment of an Associate Dean for Students demonstrates our commitment to engage and prioritise student opinion across all aspects of our operations.

4. *The Review Group recommends that the School urgently prioritises a medical curriculum and assessment review to meet the expectations of students, faculty, Health Service Executive and Irish Medical Council. This important undertaking would align with the College and University's vision and values for equitable and sustainable healthcare.*

Over the past twenty years, our Medicine curriculum has undergone continuous change and ongoing development, led by successive Associate Deans for Programmes & Educational Innovation. We recognise that our curriculum developments have taken place by quiet evolution and agree that a formal curriculum and assessment review is appropriate and are committed to commencing such an evaluation during the next academic year (2023-24). We are heartened that the Review Group commended our "high quality education, leading to successful graduates with a national reputation for clinical excellence and translational science". It is important to the School that there is extensive engagement with both staff and students such that we can confidently introduce programme enhancements whilst retaining our existing strengths. To guide these curricular developments, the School has previously identified four educational themes that include:

- Professional Medical Practice
- Evidence-based Medicine and Research
- Clinical Competencies & Preparedness for Practice
- Healthcare Systems & Quality

We believe that these themes will ensure that ongoing programme development are fully differentiated from preceding curricular changes.

5. *The Review Group recommends that the School engages and liaises with UCD Graduate Studies to examine how research students can be better supported both within and beyond their supervision arrangements. The School should also seriously consider introducing a specific postgraduate studies committee to enable significant improvements in the experience of graduate research students.*

The School will engage with UCD Graduate Studies and with our postgraduate students to enhance the graduate research student experience. We note that Review Group's reference to the UCD Postgraduate Research Student Survey 2021 and are happy to review this data to inform both our Research and our Student Engagement strategies.

Next Steps

As required by the current University quality processes, the School will develop a formal Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) outlining how it proposes to implement the Review Group Report recommendations. The QIP will be agreed with the College Principal and signed-off by the Chair of the Review Group and the Director of Quality / Head of School. The QIP will be considered by the UCD Academic Council Quality Enhancement Committee and then published alongside the Review Group Report. One year after the QIP has been accepted, a Progress Review meeting will be convened by the Registrar and Deputy President to review how the School has progressed the recommendations.

As referenced above, the actions arising from this Quality Review (and contained in the School's QIP) will be integrated with those arising from our Strategic Plan, external accreditation of our programmes and our Athena SWAN / EDI initiative.

Site Visit Timetable - UCD School of Medicine

	SESSION 1 Review Group Planning Meeting Tuesday, 18 April 2023 Room 213, Tierney Building, UCD
All times are local Irish time	
18:00-19:00	Preliminary Comments and areas for discussion, timetable review, assignment of Review Group roles for meetings/questions, additional information requests
19:30	Dinner hosted for the Review Group by the Registrar & Deputy President or Nominee

	SESSION 2 Core Activities & Stakeholder Feedback Wednesday, 19 April 2023 Review Group Baseroom: Charles Boardroom, 3rd Floor Charles Institute Stakeholder Meetings: School of Medicine Boardroom, 2nd Floor Health Science Centre
All times are local Irish time	
09:00-09:30	Review Group only – Key observations & preparation for next session
09:30-10:15	SESSION 2.1, Stakeholder meeting – College Principal
10:15-10:30	Review Group only – Key observations & preparation for next session
10:30-11:15	SESSION 2.2, Stakeholder meeting – Head of School
11:15-11:30	Review Group only – Tea/Coffee Break
11:30-12:15	SESSION 2.3, Stakeholder meeting – College Finance Manager & Head of School (School financial situation)
12:15-12:45	Review Group only – Key observations & preparation for next session
12:45-13:45	SESSION 2.4, Stakeholder meeting – Working Lunch w/ Employers & other External Stakeholders
13:45-14:15	Review Group only – Key observations & preparation for next session
14:15-15:30	SESSION 2.5, Stakeholder meeting – Support Service representatives
15:30-15:45	Review Group only – Tea/Coffee Break
15:45-16:15	SESSION 2.6, Stakeholder meeting – Postdoctoral Research staff
16:15-16:25	Review Group only – Key observations & preparation for next session
16:25-16:55	SESSION 2.7, Stakeholder meeting – School Administrative Staff
16:55-17:25	SESSION 2.8, Stakeholder meeting – School Technical Staff
17:25-18:15	SESSION 2.9, Tour of School facilities
18:15	Review Group departs

	SESSION 3 Core Activities & Stakeholder Feedback Thursday, 20 April 2023 Review Group Baseroom: Charles Boardroom, 3rd Floor Charles Institute Stakeholder Meetings: Charles Seminar Room, 1st Floor
All times are local Irish time	
09:00-09:30	Review Group only – Key observations & preparation for next session
09:30-10:30	SESSION 3.1, Stakeholder meeting – Taught and Research Postgraduate Students
10:30-10:45	Review Group only – Key observations & preparation for next session
10:45-11:45	SESSION 3.2, Stakeholder meeting – Undergraduate Students

11:45-12:00	Review Group only – Tea/Coffee Break
12:00-12:45	SESSION 3.3, Stakeholder meeting – School Research Committee, PG Taught & PG Research
12:45-14:00	Review Group only – Working Lunch
14:00-14:45	SESSION 3.4, Stakeholder meeting – New Staff (appointed within the last 3 years)
14:45-15:00	Review Group only – Key observations & preparation for next session
15:00-16:00	SESSION 2.5, Stakeholder meeting – School Teaching Staff (focus on Teaching & Learning and Curriculum)
16:00-16:15	Review Group only – Key observations & preparation for next session
16:15-17:00	SESSION 3.6, Stakeholder meeting – Programme Deans
17:00	Review Group departs

SESSION 4
Core Activities, Stakeholder Feedback & Exit Presentations
Friday, 21 April 2023
Review Group Baseroom: Charles Boardroom, 3rd Floor Charles Institute
Stakeholder Meetings: Charles Seminar Room

All times are local Irish time	
09:00-10:00	Review Group – Drafting of key initial commendations/recommendations and Review Group Report
10:00-10:30	SESSION 4.1a - Conway Institute Tour
10:30-11:00	SESSION 4.1b - Meeting with School Director of Quality
11:00-11:15	Review Group – Tea/Coffee Break
11:15-12:15	SESSION 4.2, Review Group Report Drafting Session
12:15-12:45	Review Group – Working Lunch
12:45-13:45	SESSION 4.3, Review Group Report Drafting Session
13:45-14:00	SESSION 4.4 & 4.5, Review Group meeting w/ College Principal and Director of Clinical Studies (deputising for Head of School) to outline key findings (commendations & recommendations)
14:00-14:10	Review Group only – Break
14:10-14:25	SESSION 4.6, Review Group meeting with all available School staff to outline key findings (commendations & recommendations)
14:25	Review Group departs