

# Faculty of Health Sciences Quality Report 2014

Version 3.1 – Submitted to Quality Committee 03.12.14

# 1. Executive Summary

## 1.1 Overview of the Faculty of Health Sciences

The Faculty of Health Sciences is comprised of four Schools, with 14 undergraduate programmes, 43 postgraduate programmes and a total of 807 teaching modules. There are 631 staff members in the Faculty, 242 academics, 220 researchers and 168 support staff. The Faculty is located across a multitude of sites including main campus, D'Olier Street, the Trinity Biomedical Sciences Institute (TBSI) and there are staff and teaching facilities located in many of our associated hospitals.

## 1.2 Current Quality Processes

The Faculty has robust quality processes in place, with 337 (93%) undergraduate modules being evaluated in 2013-14. The School of Dental Science has a thorough evaluation process for its undergraduate programmes, with all aspects of the programmes being reviewed through surveys, feedback from Class Reps and feedback sessions with Course Directors and Year Coordinators. The high quality of this evaluation process is not reflected in the statistical analysis of the number of modules evaluated (59%) because the Dental Science curriculum is delivered in a spiral and integrated fashion and so does not lend itself to modular evaluation. The School of Medicine reports a 96% evaluation rate for its undergraduate programmes due to the complexity of evaluating self-directed elective modules which take place in geographically and clinically diverse environments. The School is reviewing these evaluation processes in advance of the 2014-15 evaluation cycle.

Overall, 103 postgraduate taught (PGT) modules were evaluated, representing 100% evaluation rate in three of the four schools, with a gap identified in the School of Medicine due to the high volume of PGT modules on offer (320 modules across 22 programmes). The School of Medicine is undertaking a complete review of the evaluation of postgraduate courses in 2014-15 in order to ensure a consistent approach across the School and to make best use of the limited resources available.

Many of the programmes in Health Sciences are subject to evaluations by accrediting bodies; this is in addition to the Quality Review cycle and the Annual Quality Report.

A range of data-gathering methods are used across the Faculty, including online and paper-based surveys, student focus groups, Student Representatives and face-to-face interviews.

There are clear processes in place at School level for the dissemination of information from student evaluations and external examiner reports, including through the School Executive Committees, Directors of Undergraduate & Postgraduate Teaching & Learning, Module Coordinators, Year Coordinators and Curriculum Development Committees.

An emphasis is placed on 'closing the feedback loop' by conveying outcomes to the student body and to the external examiners. Undergraduate and postgraduate programmes across all four schools are under continual development in light of these robust quality review processes, and this development is related back to students in order to encourage continual engagement in the quality process.

### 1.3 Key Findings of the 2013-14 Quality Processes

The Faculty achieved a very high rate of undergraduate module evaluations, with 93% (337) of modules being evaluated in 2013-14. The Dental Science programme is not amenable to modular evaluation as the programme is delivered through a spiral and integrated curriculum, this lowers the percentage of modular evaluation for the Faculty but is not reflective of the high standard of evaluation taking place within the School of Dental Science. The undergraduate Medicine programme includes self-directed elective modules in geographically and clinically diverse settings which do not lend themselves easily to modular evaluation; the School is reviewing these evaluation processes in advance of the 2014-15 evaluation cycle.

The current policy of evaluating every undergraduate module every year has been identified as an unsatisfactory model for some programmes within Health Sciences and so the Schools request more autonomy over their student evaluation processes.

Three of the four schools in the Faculty achieved a 100% rate of module evaluation on PGT programmes. The School of Medicine identified that most PGT courses were evaluated at course level in 2013-14, with a complete review of the evaluation process for postgraduate courses being undertaken by the School in 2014-15.

All schools in the Faculty have robust mechanisms for disseminating student feedback to the appropriate staff and committees within the school. The School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Science also provide student evaluation information to External Examiners. In each school, there is a strong emphasis on providing feedback to the students regarding the outcomes of their course and module evaluations, thus closing the feedback loop.

The Faculty Executive identified that the current Quality Report emphasises the process of quality rather than showcasing the quality of the programmes. The opportunity to highlight the level of excellence which exists in the programmes in Health Sciences was not provided and so the Faculty recommends that the report template be evaluated and revised for 2014-15.

A clear process map for the Quality Report and an overview of the positioning of the Quality Report within the broader context of quality would be valuable; an integrated system for quality which minimises duplication would be welcomed by the Faculty.

### 1.4 Further Recommendations for Improvements to Quality Processes

The Faculty Executive welcomes this opportunity to review the utility and validity of the new student evaluation system. The current policy of evaluating every undergraduate module every year may not be the optimal method of evaluation; information gathered in 2014 has been broader but more superficial than in previous years so there has been a decline in the quality of the information gathered in some areas. Response rates for the undergraduate Medicine course dropped from 90% to 45-60% which may be indicative of a higher level of survey fatigue. Additionally, due to the nature of health sciences, some undergraduate programmes are delivered and assessed in an integrated, non-modular way so modular evaluations are less meaningful in these cases. It is clear that while the current model may be optimal for some programmes, it is not suitable for many areas within Health Sciences and so the Schools request more autonomy over their student evaluation processes.

Many of the programmes in Health Sciences are subject to evaluations by accrediting bodies; this is in addition to the Quality Review cycle and the now annual Quality Report. This places a considerable additional workload on Schools and so the Faculty Executive requests that a holistic approach be taken to the quality process in order to ensure that duplication is avoided at all costs.

While the collation of the Quality Report was a valuable exercise for the Faculty, the Faculty Executive highlighted that the current system places too much focus on the processes of quality review rather than on the quality within the programmes; a move towards focusing on the quality of the programmes is welcomed by Health Sciences.

Postgraduate Research (PGR) courses have not been systematically evaluated to date. The Faculty Executive is aware of several quality issues, particularly relating to thesis submission, and so there is a desire to include evaluations of PGR courses going forward.

The Faculty Executive has spent a considerable amount of time working to resolve various systems issues that have been affecting College for the last two years and the Executive is anecdotally aware of the impact of these systems issues on students. Going forward, the Faculty will provide a set of standard questions to be included in all evaluations in order to capture this data.

## 2. Summary of Best Practise across the Faculty

It is clear that utilising a variety of evaluation and feedback methods is proving successful across the Faculty and so a continued emphasis on this model will be encouraged.

The utilisation of the Class Representatives for gathering and disseminating information has been highlighted across all schools; the value and importance of these roles should be continuously emphasised at School and College level.

The School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Science provides student survey results to External Examiners; this has been identified by the Quality Office as an example of excellent quality procedure.

Most schools highlighted the use of Blackboard, College's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), as an enhancement to teaching and learning. The Faculty supports the continued use of and technical support for Blackboard. Furthermore, the Faculty supports the expansion of the available options within Blackboard in order to support the schools in further enhancements of the teaching and learning experience. Ongoing systems issues at College level have caused extensive delays to registration, which has a direct knock-on effect on students' use of Blackboard. The Faculty requests that these systems issues be resolved post haste in order to support ongoing engagement with the VLE.

The School of Nursing & Midwifery has worked to provide prompt feedback on continuous assessment (CA); the Faculty Executive supports this development, particularly since it was approved by Council in Trinity Term 2014 that individual feedback on assessed work should be provided to students within 20 working days, and that where this is not possible, students should be informed of the revised date for feedback. The Faculty will evaluate the timeliness of CA feedback across all undergraduate programmes in 2014-15.

The School of Medicine have provided a high level of detail for this pilot Quality Report, which illustrates the volume and quality of feedback received and actioned within the School on an annual basis.

The Dental Science programme is delivered through a spiral and integrated curriculum and is not amenable to modular evaluation; the School of Dental Science have a thorough evaluation process in place which involves evaluating each year of the undergraduate programme. Students are provided with the opportunity to give feedback on every module through the end of year student surveys, as well as through their Class Reps.

The Faculty supports a change in the current student evaluation system in order to better facilitate non-modular programmes as the statistical data provided for this report does not accurately reflect the high standards of student evaluation on non-modular programmes.

### 3. Issues to be escalated to College Level

Issues identified through student evaluation are predominantly addressed at School level, however some issues have been identified as beyond the scope of the School and so are now being escalated to College level through the Faculty Quality Report.

1. The Quality Report has identified an increased use of and reliance upon Blackboard across all Schools in the Faculty of Health Sciences. Student registration issues mean students do not have access to Blackboard for many weeks at the start of each semester, across many modules, which unfairly impacts on the students' experience at module level. Health Sciences students are further disadvantaged by the longer teaching terms required on most undergraduate programmes, a requirement of the professional accrediting bodies. The Faculty requests that priority be given to resolving the systems issues which affect student registration.
2. Significant delays in the registration of postgraduate students unfairly impacts on the students' experience at School level. The Faculty requests that priority be given to resolving the systems issues which affect student registration.
3. Significant difficulties were experienced by students registering on joint degree programmes; this requires urgent attention as the model of joint degrees will become more prevalent. The Faculty requests that priority be given to resolving the systems issues which affect student registration.
4. More flexibility is required within SITS to allow modular courses at postgraduate level. There are ongoing ad-hoc solutions being applied which inevitably lead to unforeseen problems and a negative impact on the students' experience. The Faculty requests that attention and resources be allocated to ensure that College systems support the often innovative growth and development which is taking place at School level.
5. The devolution of module and course surveys to School level has led to a perceived loss of impartiality in the process of student evaluation, as well as an increased workload at School level.
6. Clarification is required regarding mechanisms for dealing with recurrent poor feedback relating to individual staff members.
7. Procedures for dealing with External Examiners, in particular the receipt and distribution of reports and payment of fees, are unclear at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. Clear procedures outlining the documentation flow and where responsibility lies at each point in the process needs to be developed.
8. Some quality issues are beyond the scope of the School / Faculty / College, such as the lack of clinical tutors in the clinical placement modules in Radiation Therapy – this is under discussion with the Department of Health and National Cancer Control Programme.
9. There is a need for some clarification regarding how these issues escalated to College level will now be addressed; the Faculty would welcome feedback from the Quality Office regarding how these issues will be addressed.

## 4. Faculty of Health Sciences at a Glance

### 4.1 UG Summary (2013-14)

|   | Dental Science | Medicine  | Nursing & Midwifery | Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Science     | Total     |
|---|----------------|-----------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| No of UG courses in Faculty   | 4              | 6         | 3                   | 1                                     | 14        |
| No of UG modules in Faculty   | 44             | 165       | 113                 | 39 (including service taught modules) | 361       |
| No of UG modules evaluated  | 26* (59%)      | 159 (96%) | 113 (100%)          | 39 (100%)                             | 337 (93%) |
| Are procedures in place to ensure all modules are evaluated in 2014-15? | Yes            | Yes       | Yes                 | Yes                                   |           |

\*The Dental Science programme is delivered through a spiral and integrated curriculum and is not amenable to modular evaluation

### 4.2 PG Summary (2013-14)

|   | Dental Science | Medicine                | Nursing & Midwifery | Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Science | Total          |
|---|----------------|-------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| No of PG courses in Faculty   | 5              | 22                      | 14                  | 4                                 | 43             |
| No of PG modules in Faculty   | 23             | 320                     | 58                  | 45                                | 446            |
| No of PG modules evaluated  | 23 (100%)      | TBC                     | 58 (100%)           | 45 (100%)                         | 103 + Medicine |
| Are procedures in place to ensure all modules are evaluated in 2014-15? | Yes            | Under review in 2014-15 | Yes                 | Yes                               |                |

#### 4.3 External Examiners Summary (2012-13)

|   | Dental Science |    | Medicine |    | Nursing & Midwifery |    | Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Science |    | Total    |
|---|----------------|----|----------|----|---------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|----------|
|   | UG             | PG | UG       | PG | UG                  | PG | UG                                | PG |          |
| No of External Examinations conducted     | 10             | 04 | 28       | 22 | 06                  | 11 | 06                                | 04 | 91       |
| No of external examiners reports returned | 09             | 04 | 23       | 10 | 06                  | 07 | 05                                | 03 | 67 (74%) |

#### 4.4 Professional Accreditation Summary (2013-14)

|                                 | Dental Science | Medicine                        | Nursing & Midwifery | Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Science |
|---------------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Discipline/Programme            | None           | MSc Clinical Chemistry          | None                | None                              |
| Date of visit                   |                | July 2013                       |                     |                                   |
| Accrediting Body                |                | Institute of Biomedical Science |                     |                                   |
| Duration of accreditation cycle |                | 5 years                         |                     |                                   |

#### 4.5 Quality Review Cycle

|  |   |
|--|---|
| List of Schools/Programmes subject to a Quality Review in 2013-14      | None  |
| List of Review Reports presented to Quality Committee in 2013-14       | None  |
| List of Implementation Plans presented to Quality Committee in 2013-14 | School of Medicine (Review date 5 – 7 February 2013) - presented to Quality Committee on the 12 <sup>th</sup> December 2013 |
| List of Progress Reports presented to Quality Committee in 2013/14     | None  |
| List of Schools/Programmes scheduled for a Quality Review in 2014-15   | None  |