

TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN



Provost's Report to Council on the Review of the School of Nursing & Midwifery

1. Introduction

This report presents the outcome of a review of the School of Nursing & Midwifery. An external peer review visitation was undertaken from the 24th – 26th March 2010 by Professor Rosemary Mander, University of Edinburgh; Professor Ruth Northway, University of Glamorgan; Professor Gary Rolfe, Swansea University and Professor Helen McCutcheon, University of South Australia. The internal facilitator was Professor Marek Radomski, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Science, Trinity College Dublin.

The report is based on (i) feedback from the External Reviewers received on the 19th April 2010 and (ii) a joint submission from the School of Nursing & Midwifery and the Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences received on the 26th July 2010.

The main purpose of the School review is (a) to provide a structured opportunity for the School to reflect on its activities and plans for development, while benefiting from a constructive commentary by senior colleagues external to College; (b) to ensure that quality and standards in teaching, research and administration are being maintained and enhanced and that areas of concern in this regard are identified and addressed. Each School in College is reviewed systematically once every seven years.

2. Overview of the School

2.1 Aims and Objectives of the School

The School of Nursing and Midwifery was established in 1996 and aims to provide leadership in multi-professional healthcare research, education and practice at local, national and international levels. The School strongly supports the principle of equal access, and encourages all students and staff to achieve their full potential within an open, liberal and facilitative environment. The ethos of the School is one that sees the patient/client as the primary focus. The School seeks to make a major contribution to evidence based, high quality health care on the island of Ireland and abroad, and aims to achieve this through excellence in the provision of teaching for pre- and post-registration nurses and midwives and in the conduct of world-class research. There are two professions represented in the School, nursing and midwifery, and the nursing section is composed of four disciplines: general, psychiatric, intellectual disability and children's nursing. Teaching takes place on the Trinity College campus, in the D'Olier St premises, and in School premises in the Faculty of Health Sciences' buildings at St. James' and Tallaght Hospitals. Teaching also takes place across a number of other linked health care environments. The School has developed a national and international record of research funding, conduct and dissemination second to none in the nursing and midwifery field in the Republic of Ireland. In addition, it has become established as the largest School of Nursing and Midwifery in the country, with the highest numbers of undergraduate and research students.

2.2 Programmes to which the School provides teaching

Undergraduate:

Pre-Registration Honors Degree Programmes:

- BSc Nursing Degree Programme (BSc Cur) [General, Psychiatric, Intellectual Disability]
- BSc Children's and General Nursing Integrated Programme
- BSc Midwifery Programme

Post-Registration Programmes:

- Bachelor in Midwifery Studies - BMS(Honors)
- Bachelor in Nursing Studies - BNS (Honors)
- On-Line Access to Degree Programme

Postgraduate:

Taught Masters courses:

- M.Sc. in Dementia - new Interdisciplinary programme starting in September 2010
- M.Sc. in Gerontological Nursing
- M.Sc. in Midwifery
- M.Sc in Midwifery - Clinical Health Sciences Education
- M.Sc. in Mental Health
- M.Sc. in Mental Health - Child, Adolescent and Family strand
- M.Sc. in Nursing
- M.Sc in Nursing - Clinical Health Sciences Education
- M.Sc in Nursing - Advanced Nurse Practitioners in Emergency Nursing
- M.Sc. in Palliative Care
- M.Sc. in Cancer Care

Note: All M.Sc. courses above offer students the option to exit the course after successful completion of year one with a Postgraduate Diploma.

Postgraduate Diploma courses:

- PG Dip in Clinical Health Sciences Education
- Postgraduate Diploma in Specialist Nursing

Higher Diploma courses:

- Higher Diploma in Children's Nursing
- Higher Diploma in Midwifery

2.3 Research

The School of Nursing and Midwifery has gained international recognition within the nursing and midwifery professions as a centre of excellence for teaching and research. The school has an excellent knowledge base and contributes to research in enhanced health and social well-being across the life continuum from birth to a dignified death. In recognising the interdisciplinary nature of holistic health care the school actively fosters a culture of collaboration with other professions such as social work, education, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, medicine, sociology and health promotion. The School is already the national reference point for midwifery research and for research in ageing, dementia and intellectual disability, and has an international reputation in both these areas. Initial international networks have been developed within these fields and collaborative proposals or projects are in progress. The School has established itself as the largest and the leading School in Ireland for national and international nursing, midwifery and healthcare research and has the highest proportion and number of PhD qualified staff amongst all Schools of Nursing and Midwifery in Ireland. In addition, the School has obtained in the last five years over €5.4 million in competitive research funding from 23 national and international funding bodies. These achievements are the result of a College and School-wide commitment to excellence in research and to the enhancement of the learning experience of each of its students through research-led teaching and high quality research supervision. The School's new strategic plan for research for the years 2009 to 2014 builds on the achievements of the preceding plan for 2005-2010. The key objective of the new plan is to further enhance the school's international contribution to nursing, midwifery and healthcare research and the translation of research into policy and practice, while supporting TCD's convergent theme of a sustainable society and focusing on the next stage in the development of the School's researchers. In

order to achieve this objective, the School has undertaken a broad scoping and consultation process. The output from this process has led to the convergence and centralisation of the School's original seven pillars into a matrix of three key research strengths with multiple cross cutting themes, Women's, Children's and Families' Health and Wellbeing, Promoting Health Equality for Marginalised Groups, Preventing and Managing Chronic Illness.

The details of the new research matrix can be viewed at <http://www.nursing-midwifery.tcd.ie/>

2.4 Summary Statistical Profile of the School for the Academic Year 2008/09¹

Full-time Staff FTE	Undergraduate FTE	Postgraduate FTE	School Staff: Student Ratio	Faculty Staff: Student Ratio
65	1,022	218	19	15

Figures from Senior Lecturer's Annual Report approved by Council at its meeting on 16th December 2009

2.5 Accommodation and Facilities (Physical Resources)

The School of Nursing and Midwifery currently occupies 2,246 m² at "The Gas Building", 24 D'Olier Street and also the majority of the third floor in the Trinity Centre for Health Sciences building on St James's campus. The school also shares educational facilities on the College campus and at the associated teaching hospitals of Trinity College.

Office Space:

There are fifty-six offices for academic staff in D'Olier St. most of which are single occupancy and the remainder shared by two staff members. There are thirteen offices for Administration staff ranging from single occupancy to offices with four staff. The open plan office 4.14 in D'Olier Street has a capacity for thirty-three research students with another open area having three desks. There are nine single offices, one double office and one open space for four in Apollo House, Tara Street – all for academic and research staff. Accommodation in Apollo House is temporary and the School has no indication of when this space may need to be vacated. There are five offices in the Trinity Centre for Health Sciences at St. James's Hospital for the clinical manager, clinical tutors and technicians, one of which is available to other staff for their use when present in the Centre.

Social Spaces:

In the D'Olier Street building there is a staff common room and four tea stations at other locations throughout the building. The front foyer area has a coffee shop and a seating area for students. The building is within close walking distance of the main College campus with the many social spaces that this affords. Students also have been provided with additional seating around the Glass Cortile area. Students at St James's have access to a student area in the old Stone Building and there is a tea station in Apollo House.

Additional space:

There are three rooms in D'Olier Street, apart from teaching spaces, which can be used for meetings – with capacities of 20, 12 and 6. The meeting room in Apollo House can accommodate ten people. In D'Olier Street there are three rooms where photocopiers are kept and one of them also serves as the post room. There are a number of stores – for stationary and cleaning equipment. A bigger one, of area 20.42m², is used as the School archive. In the Trinity Centre, there are seven stores used for equipment and other supplies needed by the clinical laboratories.

3. Reviewer Recommendations

The Reviewers make the following recommendations;

The Reviewers note that a number of the issues identified in the review report have their roots in the structure and regulations of the wider College and, in some cases, of national health service policy. In these cases, they would encourage the School Executive to meet with representatives from the College and from service providers to explore creative solutions and work-arounds.

¹ The staff FTEs include all Professors, Associate Professors, Senior Lecturers and Lecturers funded from the core HEA grant, or from self-financing courses, and all part-time and occasional staff and demonstrators, converted to an FTE, who are funded from core grant or from self-financing courses.

The Reviewers further recommend that:

1. there is continuation of support for staff to receive dedicated time to undertake PhD studies.
2. there is clarification regarding current systems for funding of post-graduate provision within the School of Nursing and Midwifery. Such clarification is needed between the School and the College where there appear to be differing perceptions. It is also needed in relation to the Department of Health as it needs to be determined whether their funding for nurse education includes post graduate provision or not. If it is the latter, then clarification is needed as to where such funding should come from.
3. the School should consider giving educational research a stronger emphasis.
4. the School should be allocated space within the new biosciences building to allow for greater synergy and integration within the College.
5. the School develops new, and strengthens existing, collaborative partnerships with other Schools / Departments within the College.
6. the School promotes further the work they have undertaken in relation to developing service user involvement in research.
7. there is an increase in the number of staff at senior grades (Professor, Associate Professor and Senior Lecturer) and that staff currently in post are provided with the support to progress to such grades.
8. the School should give greater attention and recognition to the practice component of the undergraduate courses when the students return to the School following a clinical placement. This might include more time and focus on reflection-on-action in relation to clinical experiences and development of the academic tutorial system in order to deal with clinical concerns of students.
9. the School should consider a review of theoretical assessments to determine whether the assessment load could be reduced.
10. issues surrounding the internship programme be discussed further with students and service providers, particularly in relation to:
 - The students' perceived lack of relevant clinical experience on entering their final year
 - The current problems being experienced by service providers caused by the shortening of the internship from 52 to 36 weeks
11. the School and the College should explore together ways to ensure greater flexibility in relation to admission, course structure and assessment of students on taught postgraduate courses, including:
 - The consideration of assessment of prior learning (APL) and the assessment of prior experiential learning (APEL) as entry criteria to postgraduate courses;
 - An increasing commitment to on-line delivery of educational material;
 - A greater emphasis on work-based learning and the delivery of education in the work-place;
 - The introduction of larger modules or assessments shared across several modules in order to reduce the number of assessments and increase the time between them.
12. the School should consider establishing a more visible presence in clinical areas, for example by establishing centres of excellence and/or practice development units where academic staff

can gain appropriate clinical contact and develop projects at the interface between academic and clinical scholarship/research.

13. the School and the College should work together to develop a structured career path for professional/clinical schools which recognises and rewards teaching, the scholarship of practice and clinical excellence in keeping with Universities of similar standing elsewhere. This is particularly important at junior promotions committee level in order to address the issue of the ratio of junior to senior staff.
14. the School develops a transparent workload model in conjunction with an individual staff performance plan that reflects individual workload attribution.

4. Provosts Recommendations to Council

In light of the Review Report and the responses from the School of Nursing and Midwifery and the Faculty Dean, it is recommended that:

1. The School of Nursing and Midwifery working closely with the Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, and other relevant Academic Officers, should consider the detailed recommendations of the Review Report and draw up an implementation plan² for Council approval.
2. A working group (chair and membership to be decided) reporting to Council should be established to consider recommendation #13 in respect of developing “a structured career path for professional/clinical” staff and make recommendations to the University Council.

² See Procedures and Protocol for Quality Review of Schools 2008/09 at <http://www.tcd.ie/vp-cao/qu/qopdf/adrapp2.pdf>

5. Review Report

Quality Review of the School of Nursing and Midwifery 24th – 26th March 2010

This review was undertaken over a period of three days, during which time the review team was afforded the opportunity to meet with College and School staff, a range of students and representatives of health care provider organisations. In addition, the School's clinical skills facility was visited, as were representative clinical areas in both nursing and midwifery. Prior to the review visit, relevant documentation had been forwarded to the review team to assist us in making our assessment. We would like to thank College officers, School staff and the internal facilitator for their assistance both before and during their visit: this was much appreciated.

This is the second Quality Review of the School of Nursing and Midwifery, the previous review having been undertaken in 2002. We were provided with copies of that report and, as an overall comment, would like to commend the School for the tremendous progress which has been made over the past eight years. Where appropriate in this report, reference will be made to this previous assessment to provide evidence of such progress.

Research

The previous Quality Review Report noted that research within the School was at a very early stage of development. It identified a wide range of research interests which were not felt to be sustainable given the size of the School, and stressed the need for a strategic approach to development. It also argued that, given the stage of research development within the School, comparison with other centres would not have been meaningful. One activity which was suggested, however, was that the School might wish to undertake an internal assessment based on the framework of the then recent 2001 RAE in the UK.

In 2010, however, it is evident that a great deal of development has taken place in relation to research over the past eight years and that the School is committed to further strategic development in this area. We were impressed by the enthusiasm of both staff and research students and by their level of commitment to advancing the research agenda. Nonetheless, it was noted that there are a few staff who would not see research as their personal priority for development. This is not unusual within a school of nursing and midwifery where historically there has not been a tradition of research and where staff may view their focus as being more on the development of teaching and learning. This point will be returned to below.

Since the previous Quality Review Report there has been a further RAE within the UK: RAE 2008. Within that assessment, Nursing and Midwifery demonstrated significant development from the 2001 position. Given that TCD School of Nursing and Midwifery has also undergone significant development during that period, and given that we are asked to make international comparisons between the School and similar centres in other countries, this report will refer across to the RAE 2008 Nursing and Midwifery Subject Overview Report (HEFCE, 2009) where relevant. It will also utilise the structure of the RAE 2008 (outputs, environment and esteem) to structure this section concerning research in order to facilitate such comparison.

In relation to *outputs* it was not possible within the context of this review to read and assess individual items. However, we were provided with a list of School publications (over three hundred and forty since 2004) and from this list a number of things were evident. First, staff are publishing in a range of journals. Some of these are perhaps focused primarily on practitioners but are still peer reviewed. This is an important vehicle for dissemination of research since it can perhaps more directly impact upon practice. There are, however, also a significant number of papers which have been published in high impact international journals. Second, it is evident from the list of publications that there are some clear lines of inquiry where a number of papers have been published (for example in midwifery and mental health). The RAE Nursing and Midwifery Subject Overview Report noted the range of methodological approaches which were utilised. A similar range of approaches is evident from the publications of the School.

In relation to the *research environment* there are a number of areas worthy of note. Since 2002 the School has invested significantly in developing its research capacity. The previous Quality Review Report in 2002 suggested that focusing on developing all staff to PhD level was a slow route to progress. Nonetheless, since that time the School has made significant progress towards increasing

the proportion of staff with PhDs both through appointing new staff who already hold the qualification and through supporting staff development in this area. A number of schemes have been put in place to allow staff dedicated time to develop PhD proposals, to write up, and to publish after completion. The School is to be commended for these and encouraged to continue them to support further staff in the coming years.

Overall, the number of post graduate research students (both staff and non staff) has greatly increased with 60 students currently registered. A number of support mechanisms have been put in place such as a dedicated handbook and monthly research support and education days. These appear to be greatly valued by students with the latter providing the opportunity to both meet with other students informally and to receive focused education around specific topics. The number of research students imposes heavy demands in relation to supervision. This will ease as the number of potential supervisors within the School increases, but to date it has only been feasible with the imaginative use of visiting professors who have been actively involved in student supervision. One issue which was noted, however, in relation to post graduate provision was a difference in perception between the School and the College in relation to the fees for such students. The School feels that currently they do not receive the fees for post graduate students as all their funding is viewed as coming from the Department of Health rather than from the Higher Education Authority. However, they feel that this funding is for pre-registration students only and that it does not cover post-graduate provision. The College indicated that the School's funding is viewed as coming from the Department of Health but that they do, in fact, receive the fees for their post graduate students. There would appear to be two issues here which need to be addressed. First, at an internal College level there is the difference in perception which needs clarification. Second, at an external level there would appear to be a need to enter into discussions with the Department of Health regarding funding for post graduate provision for nurses and midwives. Both of these issues need to be addressed if post graduate provision within the School of Nursing and Midwifery is to continue to expand.

The previous Quality Review Report suggested that there was a need for strategic direction in relation to the development of research priorities within the School. Accordingly, research activity since 2002 has been centred on seven pillars or themes and each of these pillars is evident in terms of outputs. However, more recent developments have led the School to once again review their strategic direction such that they have developed a matrix with three key research strengths and several cross cutting themes. Within each of the three areas there are clear areas of research strength and some of the research being undertaken is world leading. For example, the longitudinal research concerning ageing in people with intellectual disabilities is internationally significant and ground breaking in many respects. Each of the three areas has funded research programmes within it and, where possible, research students are attached to on-going research programmes. Over the past eight years the School has developed a good track record of securing funding for research and this funding has come from a variety of competitive sources.

Discussion with staff during the review visit also provided reassurance that in identifying the key priorities within the matrix, due account had been taken of clinical and policy priorities and that the resulting areas were those likely to attract funding on an on-going basis. The 2008 RAE Nursing and Midwifery Subject Overview Report noted that 'the strongest submissions demonstrated focused research programmes with a clear emphasis on capacity building, sustainability and effective knowledge transfer'. The School's development over the past eight years and their current strategic plans indicate that they also demonstrate such strengths.

One area which we did note, however, was that in moving from the seven pillars to the research matrix, one area of research which did appear to have been given less emphasis was educational research. It was suggested that the School might wish to consider this further, since having a focus on educational research might provide encouragement and opportunity for those staff who are more reluctant to engage in research to become involved in researching their own educational practice. This issue will be returned to below.

Within the School there is a dedicated area for research students. However, some research and academic staff are located outside the School in temporary accommodation. The School has expressed the wish to have some space allocated within the new College Biosciences Building and there appears to be some support for this within the Faculty. However, the College view appeared to be that the new facility is for wet lab based research rather than for the type of research undertaken

within the School. Whilst accepting this point, the School feels that their presence within the facility would provide the opportunity for greater synergy between their research and that undertaken in other parts of the College. It would also further the integration of the School within the College and hence we would support the School in this request.

Research links with other parts of the College do operate via committees for example, and some collaborative work is being undertaken with other Schools (for example, members of the intellectual disability discipline are linked with the Centre For Successful Ageing, The Trinity Consortium on Ageing, Social Policy). However, this is an area which could perhaps be further developed. One area which was stressed within the 2008 RAE Nursing and Midwifery Subject Overview Report was the importance of service user and public involvement in research. This was not something which was strongly emphasised in the reading materials provided for the review panel in respect of the School, but in speaking with staff during the visit, it was evident that this is an area where developments have taken place (for example, in relation to people with intellectual disabilities, people with mental health problems and women attending maternity services). These activities have included the involvement of service users in the development and design of research studies such as TILDA and MidU. We would therefore encourage the School not to 'undersell' themselves in this respect. In relation to *indicators of esteem* it is clear that a number of staff undertake editorial or review duties in respect of a range of journals. Others were members of the consultative committee which developed the Research Strategy for Nursing and Midwifery in Ireland. A number of members of staff have presented at international conferences. The School is also to be commended for hosting an annual international conference. The School therefore clearly has an international profile. Overall then, it can be seen that the School of Nursing and Midwifery has made tremendous gains over the past eight years in relation to research. This is evident both when comparing their current position with that of eight years ago and by comparing their current standing to other schools of nursing and midwifery internationally. In this context they currently have good standing. This progress has been achieved by the hard work of the School staff and by careful leadership and strategic planning, for which they are to be commended. Nonetheless it is evident that they now wish to move forward to another level, and that support will be required to make this a reality. Some key areas of support have already been noted, such as funding for post graduate students. However, a further area which was raised was that of staff development and progression.

A phenomenon which was widely identified was that of the ratio of academic staff within senior grades compared with those employed at lower levels. The School has only one Professor, despite having sixty PhD students and has proportionately fewer staff at Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor and Professor levels than other Schools within the College.

Our recommendation is that the School of Nursing and Midwifery should seek to resolve this problem by 'growing its own' promoted staff from within the existing establishment. International appointments to senior grades may be possible but recruitment from within Ireland is considered less feasible since the School of Nursing and Midwifery is already positioned as the leading institution within Ireland. Furthermore, it is our belief that there are staff currently in post who, given the correct support, would be more than capable of progressing to more senior levels.

Such progression needs to take place at two levels. First, there needs to be movement from Senior Lecturer and Associate Professor grades to full Professorial status. Second, there needs to be greater progression from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer grade. However, as applies elsewhere in the College, the promotion system focuses on publication of empirical research. It may be suggested that other research and scholarly publications are not given adequate recognition.

We recommend that the promotions system should give more, and more appropriate, recognition to publications other than those traditionally recognised and rewarded. These publications would include staff writing about educational innovations and about philosophical analysis of educational, professional and possibly clinical issues (see previous comments regarding educational research). Promotion by such a route has led, in other well-established universities, to Senior Lecturer and Chair promotions that reward excellence in teaching. The visiting professor system, which is already well-used in other ways, might also be used to facilitate these publications. For those staff with a crucially important on-going clinical involvement, such activity might feed in to the development of a publications strategy to facilitate promotions applications. This issue will be revisited below in the context of teaching and learning.

Teaching and Learning

The overall impression of the team is that the School is fulfilling its teaching and learning mission to a high standard. Whilst we therefore commend everyone involved in the provision and delivery of the educational remit of the School, the students and service providers raised a number of issues that they would like to be addressed. Some of these echo issues raised in the previous review and some are structural issues for the College as a whole that cannot be addressed solely by the School. We also recognise that professional education makes wider demands on faculty and students than traditional theoretical courses, and entails additional responsibilities towards the professions of nursing and midwifery, towards the partner health service providers and towards the general public. These extra demands and responsibilities must be taken into account when drawing comparisons with other schools and departments within the College.

As with all professional schools, undergraduate and postgraduate students tend to be very distinct groups with quite different needs and expectations.

Undergraduate

Recruitment to undergraduate nursing and midwifery courses is very buoyant, with several candidates competing for each place. In contrast, applicants to the one-year part-time routes in both nursing and midwifery have fallen away significantly over the past five years. This can be attributed in part to a limited and ever-shrinking pool of applicants.

One of the main findings from the previous review in 2002 was that 'students ... did not feel that they were students of Trinity College and that they felt little sense of community with the wider University'. In the intervening eight years the courses have been upgraded from diploma level to full degree status and the School has moved physically closer to the main Trinity campus. Despite these geographical and educational moves, most of the undergraduate students we spoke to continued to feel psychologically and socially isolated from the rest of the College. As one student put it, 'the main campus is only across the road, but it feels a thousand miles away'. However, whereas the students interviewed in the 2002 review felt that their base was the hospital, our interviewees felt a much stronger affiliation to the School. We were therefore encouraged that academic staff are now integrated to a much greater extent into wider College life, and we would expect that, given time, this effect will filter down to students and shape their attitudes towards the College.

The students generally spoke very highly of the quality of their education but identified a number of structural issues, including:

- Over-assessment of theoretical components
- Midwifery students claimed that they were sometimes not told in advance about hand-in dates for assignments
- It was pointed out that Midwifery students take their final exam at a time when they feel they have had insufficient clinical experience, a timing that is enforced by the Department of Health and Children
- Midwifery students questioned the relevance of some clinical experience, especially when potentially significant experience such as paediatrics was not provided
- Compared with UK programmes, the lack of community midwifery experience may also be regarded as a shortcoming. Some students use their, albeit short, clinical elective experience to remedy this. The involvement of students in the system of Early Transfer Home (ETH), which is becoming established, might be another remedy

We considered that these points could be addressed without too much difficulty.

Another main finding from 2002 that continues to be an issue of concern for many students is the perceived separation of theory and practice. Nursing students (but not midwifery students) claimed that it often felt as though they were taking two separate courses and that few links were being made between the theory and practice components. In particular, they identified a lack of feedback and reflection on their practice experiences when they returned to the classroom. In addition, academic staff were not seen by the nursing students as championing practice-based problems, which were seen as the domain of clinical staff and clinical tutors. However, some students felt that some clinical concerns could not be dealt with by clinically-based staff, and would welcome more involvement from their academic tutors. It should be emphasised, however, that this was not a universal concern, particularly amongst the midwifery students.

Related to this lack of perceived integration between the theoretical and practical components of the course was an observation from the service providers that the presence and support of academic staff in clinical areas was 'patchy'. Again, this comment did not apply to the midwifery course, where the vast majority of academic staff appeared to have regular and sustained clinical contact.

The final-year internship was welcomed both by students and service providers and was seen as a real strength of the course. However, service providers were unhappy that it had been reduced from 52 to 36 weeks, since this had caused problems for them in maintaining adequate staffing level for the 16 week period between internships. We recognise that the problem has been created by national policy decisions outside of the control of the School, but we suggest that the School and the service providers creatively explore some possible solutions.

Many students identified that the gap between their core-skills clinical placements in Year 2 and their internship in Year 4 was too great, and they felt that the specialist placements in Year 3 did not fully prepare them for the extra clinical responsibilities they perceived to be expected of them as final year students. Nursing students felt that this problem could be addressed by revisiting core skills before their internship, and the midwifery students suggested that they would be prepared to work over the summer break at the end of Year 3 in order to acquire extra relevant experiences.

The students and service providers also identified problems arising from the statutory replacement of trained staff members by students in clinical areas, with both parties concerned at the high ratio of students to trained staff. Once again, however, this is a national rather than a local issue.

Although we have focused on issues and problems in this section, we wish to reiterate that our overall impression is of two thriving undergraduate programmes (nursing and midwifery) that are well-received both by students and service-providers.

Postgraduate

Recruitment to taught postgraduate courses remains stable, but progress needs to be made if the School is to meet its target of increasing numbers of students attending M.Sc. programmes.

Many of the students we spoke to identified a lack of flexibility of course delivery at postgraduate level as a major issue. Students on all courses noted that the structuring and timetabling of Masters programmes is often not convenient to practitioners with full-time jobs. The M.Sc. Nursing students suggested that modules could be spread out over a longer period of time and the M.Sc. Midwifery students complained that some hand-in dates for assignments were too close together. It was acknowledged, however, that the School was constrained by College regulations in this respect. The majority of the students we spoke to agreed that the 'Trinity experience' and the perception of Trinity as the best university in the country was part of their reason for enrolling in this particular school, and that this factor outweighed the lack of flexibility. The same reasoning was applied to the perceived high cost of enrolment fees.

However, the service managers reported that they are increasingly sending their staff on cheaper and more flexible student-friendly courses at other universities. The 'Trinity experience' means little to the service managers who are seconding the staff. If recruitment to the Masters programmes is to be significantly increased, issues of flexibility of entry, course structure and assessment need to be reviewed. This observation applies equally to service managers' views of the range of programmes available. Some specific recommendations in relation to these issues are made at the end of the report. Library provision was widely commended, particularly the electronic access to material. Some students, though, considered that the use of electronic teaching methods varied hugely between different members of the teaching staff.

Staff Development

We have pointed out above that Trinity College places substantial and over-riding emphasis on research outputs as the main criterion for academic promotion. We suggest that professional schools such as schools of nursing and midwifery make broader and often competing demands on staff, which should be recognised by the College. Many staff are registered nurses and midwives and expressed to us a professional and moral duty to students, patients and clients, the health service and the professions of nursing and midwifery. These additional duties and obligations were often framed in terms of a primary commitment to education rather than research.

Many of the staff we spoke to felt pulled in three directions: to publish and win research grants; to prepare students to the highest possible professional standards to practise as nurses and midwives; and to maintain their own clinical competence and/or expertise. Although it was felt that the School

valued and encouraged all three roles, only the first was recognised by the College as a promotion route. It should be noted that, despite these pressures, some nursing and the majority of midwifery staff continue to be active in clinical practice. This is to be commended, and recommendations for recognising and enhancing the clinical role of academic staff are made at the end of the report.

The School has identified three staffing issues related to promotion in its self-assessment document.

- A high ratio of junior to senior staff
- A shortage of staff in senior positions, including professorial chairs
- A desire to appoint joint clinical chairs

Barriers to these aspirations have been identified in the self-assessment document as inflexibility in College promotion regulations and procedures and a freeze on funding, including exclusion from the ARAM/RPM process for research funding.

We wish to commend staff highly on their continuing professional and academic development and would encourage the College to consider seriously the particular challenges involved in providing statutory professional education within the strictures of national policy and to reflect these in its promotion criteria. Failure to do so will, in our opinion, seriously impede the development of nursing and midwifery as academic disciplines and will hamper succession planning within the School.

Service to College and Society

There is significant evidence that the School has made considerable contributions to the College and the internal and external communities it serves. Academics from the School continue to serve and contribute to a large number of College committees, while various administrative staff share their expertise in the development and efficient implementation of administrative systems and processes with other schools and faculties.

Many academic staff are sought after to provide leadership in the development of policy regarding their discipline and specialisation at national and international level in addition to membership on high calibre editorial boards. This level of recognition reflects well on the School and College and is indicative of a successful enterprise for education and research.

Of particular note is the School's significant standing in research related to intellectual disability (ID) and the contribution its research is making to improve the lives of those with ID. The School is to be commended on its annual conference *Transforming Healthcare through Research & Education*. This conference attracts internationally renowned nursing, midwifery and other healthcare researchers and conference attendees from around the globe, providing a significant opportunity for the dissemination of important research findings that ultimately impact on patient and client care.

Resources

Staff

Earlier in the report we have highlighted the issue of the ratio of academic staff at senior levels compared with those employed at lower levels, noting that the School has only one Professor despite a very large number of PhD students, and proportionately fewer staff at Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor and Professor levels than other schools within the College. It is vital for the School's further growth, development, capacity and capability building that the School seeks to resolve this problem by 'growing its own' promoted staff from within the existing establishment (see page 4).

The School appears to be appropriately resourced in terms of administrative support staff. However, the ability to attract and retain these important members of the School requires vigilance in ensuring career pathways, staff development and internal rewards that recognise their significant contribution to the School's growth and success. The School may also wish to consider the adoption of the principles of Lean Thinking to ensure the continuation of streamlined effective and efficient administrative systems and processes to support the core business of the School.

Physical Infrastructure

The development of Zone 4 in D'Olier Street has been significant in assisting the School to achieve many of its physical requirements. However, as the School and its successes grow in research and education, additional teaching and research spaces will be required. Already there is an urgency to

move those staff located outside the School in temporary accommodation to more permanent accommodation. We have noted previously that the School has expressed the wish to have some space allocated within the new College Biosciences Building and we support the School in their view that a nursing and midwifery presence within the facility would provide the opportunity for greater synergy between their research and that undertaken in other parts of the College.

It was noted in the 2002 review, and again by us, that most of the undergraduate students continue to feel psychologically and socially isolated from the rest of the College. If the “Trinity Experience” is to be something to which the College aspires for all students, this situation will require the School and College to consider how they might better integrate these students into student life at Trinity.

Financial

The School is to be commended on its effective financial management and its financial contributions to the College. However, in relation to post graduate provision there is some dissonance between the School and the College in relation to the fees for postgraduate students. This has been documented earlier in this report but it should be reiterated that a resolution of this issue is vital if the School is to have the monetary resources to support its strategic growth and development. It is important to emphasise that the School has made tremendous gains since its inception and this has occurred because of strong leadership and management of the School, combined with the hard work of the staff. The School has reasonable and achievable aspirations as identified in the self-assessment document. However, without the appropriate level of funding (that is the funding provided under the same criteria as applied to other schools) their aspirations will be severely hampered.

Organisational Structure and Planning

The School governance structures are clearly articulated in the self assessment document and it is noted that there is a large number of committees and meetings. As the School continues to grow and develop it may wish to review these structures to ensure they are streamlined in order to minimise the number and frequency of committees and meetings academic staff are required to attend. Transparency of workload attribution and effort are appropriate for the School at this level of development. However, there appears to be a difference in perception between the School Executive and some staff in terms of the workload being transparent, and this is an issue that the school should strive to rectify. Whilst the College may not take part in staff performance appraisal, input from staff suggested that many in the school would welcome an opportunity to discuss, plan and get support from the Head of School for their career development.

The current structures within the School appear to provide appropriate channels for communication and dissemination of information to the College, staff and students, with student feedback sought regularly to inform course review and updating. However, meetings with students did highlight a small number of issues the School may wish to engage with:

- A perceived lack of confidentiality of student feedback regarding clinical placement issues – students felt that they were identifiable and therefore vulnerable
- Debriefing sessions post-placement are not valued by students because of a perception that academic staff believe these issues should be dealt with in the clinical area
- Lack of clarity about who are the “Student Champions”, particularly in relation to issues they might have arising from their clinical placements.
- A perceived lack of anonymity of the college student feedback survey was raised as an issue – some students reported hearing in the clinical area about their feedback
- Student perception that feedback is not acted on – this could be addressed by ensuring that actions as a result of feedback from each study period are communicated to the student cohort.

These issues may require some attention to ensure that the feedback loop includes the provision of information back to the students regarding School response to their feedback.

Recommendations

It should be noted that a number of the issues identified in this report have their roots in the structure and regulations of the wider College and, in some cases, of national health service policy. In these cases, we would encourage the School Executive to meet with representatives from the College and from service providers to explore creative solutions and work-arounds.

We further recommend:

1. That there is continuation of support for staff to receive dedicated time to undertake PhD studies.
2. That there is clarification regarding current systems for funding of post-graduate provision within the School of Nursing and Midwifery. Such clarification is needed between the School and the College where there appear to be differing perceptions. It is also needed in relation to the Department of Health as it needs to be determined whether their funding for nurse education includes post graduate provision or not. If it is the latter, then clarification is needed as to where such funding should come from.
3. That the School should consider giving educational research a stronger emphasis.
4. That the School should be allocated space within the new biosciences building to allow for greater synergy and integration within the College.
5. That the School develops new, and strengthens existing, collaborative partnerships with other Schools / Departments within the College.
6. That the School promotes further the work they have undertaken in relation to developing service user involvement in research.
7. That there is an increase in the number of staff at senior grades (Professor, Associate Professor and Senior Lecturer) and that staff currently in post are provided with the support to progress to such grades.
8. That the School should give greater attention and recognition to the practice component of the undergraduate courses when the students return to the School following a clinical placement. This might include more time and focus on reflection-on-action in relation to clinical experiences and development of the academic tutorial system in order to deal with clinical concerns of students.
9. That the School should consider a review of theoretical assessments to determine whether the assessment load could be reduced.
10. That issues surrounding the internship programme be discussed further with students and service providers, particularly in relation to:
 - The students' perceived lack of relevant clinical experience on entering their final year
 - The current problems being experienced by service providers caused by the shortening of the internship from 52 to 36 weeks
11. That the School and the College should explore together ways to ensure greater flexibility in relation to admission, course structure and assessment of students on taught postgraduate courses, including:
 - The consideration of assessment of prior learning (APL) and the assessment of prior experiential learning (APEL) as entry criteria to postgraduate courses;
 - An increasing commitment to on-line delivery of educational material;

- A greater emphasis on work-based learning and the delivery of education in the work-place;
 - The introduction of larger modules or assessments shared across several modules in order to reduce the number of assessments and increase the time between them.
12. That the School should consider establishing a more visible presence in clinical areas, for example by establishing centres of excellence and/or practice development units where academic staff can gain appropriate clinical contact and develop projects at the interface between academic and clinical scholarship/research.
 13. That the School and the College should work together to develop a structured career path for professional/clinical schools which recognises and rewards teaching, the scholarship of practice and clinical excellence in keeping with Universities of similar standing elsewhere. This is particularly important at junior promotions committee level in order to address the issue of the ratio of junior to senior staff.
 14. That the School develops a transparent workload model in conjunction with an individual staff performance plan that reflects individual workload attribution.

Rosemary Mander, University of Edinburgh, Scotland
Helen McCutcheon, University of South Australia
Ruth Northway, University of Glamorgan, Wales
Gary Rolfe, Swansea University, Wales

6. Response from the School and the Faculty Dean to the Review Report for Nursing & Midwifery

Introduction by the Dean of Health Sciences

It is a pleasure to support the response of the School of Nursing & Midwifery to the review. The School has made exemplary efforts to build its position as the leading school of Nursing and Midwifery in Ireland. The Report acknowledges this while giving constructive feedback to the School on the areas which are causing concern. The School addresses the concerns around educational delivery and the student experience with a series of clear measures. The Report indicates that the School is heading in the right direction and that it has a clear strategic focus.

The School's Response

The School of Nursing and Midwifery welcomes the reviewers' report which acknowledges *'the tremendous progress which has been made over the past eight years'* and that the *'School of Nursing and Midwifery is already positioned as the leading institution within Ireland'*.

Improving Educational delivery and the student experience

With regard to the recommendation *'That the School should give greater attention and recognition to the practice component of the undergraduate course when the students return to the School following a clinical placement'*,

-There are a number of initiatives already in place to support students, including debriefing meetings with Course Co-ordinators and Heads of Discipline, and structured reflection sessions particularly in 4th year. However, greater efforts will be made by Academic Staff in meetings of the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee and the Joint Working Group meeting to feed students' experiences back to staff and practice-based problems in clinical areas.

The School acknowledges the reviewers comment on *'the students' perceived lack of relevant clinical experience on entering their final year'* and has initiated measures to address this concern.

- BSc (Cur) student's last placement in 3rd year and their first placement in 4th year are now core placements and are related directly to their specific area of Nursing.
- Learning outcomes relating to clinical areas are now on Web CT to enable core skills to be revised before their internship.
- An experience of night duty has been piloted very successfully, and is now being rolled out in the first core placement for 4th year students.

Unfortunately the issue *'of shortening of the internship from 52 to 36 weeks'* is a statutory requirement and is not within the control of the School. However, this concern will be communicated to the relevant statutory bodies.

The Dean of the Faculty and the Head of School welcome the reviewers' recommendations that the *'School and the College should explore together ways to ensure greater flexibility in relation to admission, course structure and assessment of students on taught postgraduate courses'*.

- The School recognizes that the lack of flexibility in relation to Postgraduate Education is a major concern and, in a very competitive market, seriously disadvantages the School.
- This is supported by the reviewers in their comment from the service managers who *'reported that they are increasingly sending their staff on cheaper and more flexible student-friendly courses at other universities'*. The Faculty Dean and the School Executive welcome the fact that the issue of flexibility in relation to Postgraduate Education is currently under review at College Level.

In relation to the reviewers recommendation on the need for greater *'commitment to on-line delivery of educational material and a greater emphasis on work-based learning and the delivery of education in the work-place'*.

- The School reports that it is actively working on further developing electronic communication with students and that many members of staff are already using WebCT. The School's Strategic Plan 2010-14 identifies key performance indicators in relation to Web Based learning.

Valuing the linkage to clinical areas

With regard to the recommendation that *'the School should consider establishing a more visible presence in clinical areas for example by establishing centres of excellence and/or practice development units ...'*,

- The school agrees that this is important, and a number of initiatives are already in place to encourage greater connection to the clinical areas. For example one of the key Goals in the Schools Strategic Plan 2009-2014 is *'to support and develop the research strengths by improving and formalizing stronger more formal collaborative links with the Health Service Providers'*. In addition the Schools plans for the appointment of Joint Clinical Chairs will be critical with respect to this recommendation.

More challenging will be the reviewers' recommendation: *'That the School and the College should work together to develop a structured career path for professional/clinical schools which recognises and rewards teaching, the scholarship of practice and clinical excellence in keeping with Universities of similar standing elsewhere'*. This is particularly important at junior promotions committee level in order to address the issue of the ratio of junior to senior staff.

The Head of School and the Faculty Dean are committed to opening a dialogue with other Applied Schools and with the College about ways to balance overall College goals and standards for scholarship and promotion with a need for recognition of clinical and teaching excellence which helps to enhance the national and international standings of Applied Schools such as Nursing & Midwifery.

Research and staff development

The School welcomes acknowledgement from the reviewers on the outcomes of its investments in building research capacity particularly in terms of research outputs and numbers of staff now at PhD level. The School Executive and the Faculty Dean recognise the merits of the reviewers' recommendations *'to continue them to support further staff in the coming years'*.

- The Schools Strategic Plan 2009-2014 outlines its solid commitment to continue these initiatives which includes for example research capacity building leave to assist additional staff to progress to PhD, protected time for staff post PhD, Post Doctoral and PhD stipends and competitive grants to assist with dissemination.
- The School has, in addition, a well established policy on sabbatical leave which it endeavours to facilitate on a rotational basis, ensuring that all staff members have equal opportunity to apply.

Postgraduate Education

The success of the School in increasing its PhD numbers (with 60 PhD students currently registered) would not have occurred in the absence of focused, strategic, initiatives such as the Visiting Professorship programme and the massive effort on behalf of staff involved in supervision. The reviewers rightly noted that *'the number of research students imposes heavy demands in relation to supervision'*. The School welcomes the many positive comments made about its PhD programme including its *'dedicated handbook and monthly research support and education days* which the reviewers reported were *'greatly valued by students'*.

The School welcomes the reviewers' recommendation that there is an urgent need *'for clarification regarding current systems for funding of postgraduate provision within the School'*. This is a longstanding issue which is putting huge financial strain on the School which currently only receives funding for undergraduate education from the HSE. Given its very successful Postgraduate Education Programme, including 60 PhD students the School welcomes the reviewers' recommendation that *'College needs to urgently address this and negotiate with the relevant bodies where the funding for Postgraduate Nurse and Midwife Education should come from'*.

- The Faculty Dean and Vice Provost are aware of the urgency of this issue, and recognizing the financial strain, workload for staff, as well as the strategic importance of PhD students for both the School and College, the Faculty Dean has agreed to provide some financial support while we await these issues resolution by the relevant authorities. The College is currently discussing this issue with relevant bodies.

A focused Research Agenda

The School welcomes the reviewers' positive comments in relation to its consolidation of research and its future strategic direction with three key research strengths and several cross cutting themes. The School welcomes the reviewers' comments that *'there are clear areas of research strength and some of the research being undertaken is world leading. For example, the longitudinal research concerning ageing in people with intellectual disabilities is internationally significant and ground breaking in many respects'*. The Head of School and Faculty Dean particularly welcome the reviewers' comments, *'that under the School current strategic plans can be ranked favourably with leading international universities under the RAE exercise'*.

In relation to the reviewers' comments *'that the School should consider giving educational research a stronger emphasis'* the School wishes to confirm its continued support for, and focus on, educational research.

- By reframing educational research as cross-cutting themes of 'education' and 'research-led teaching' in the new research matrix it was not the intention to demote educational research but rather to graphically represent its integral place within all major research programmes. In response to feedback from the review panel the school will revise the research matrix to demonstrate this relationship more accurately.

With regard to the recommendation *'that the School not 'undersell' themselves on their commitment to the importance of service user and public involvement in research given their achievements in user involvement in intellectual disability and Mental health research'*.

The Head of School recognises that this is a key strength and a series of initiatives to make this more visible both at a national and international level have been identified including publications and workshops/seminars.

A need for space

The Review supports the School's need for increased space and infrastructure to support its research activity and the Dean of the Faculty and Head of School welcomes the reviewer's recommendation *'that the School should be allocated space within the new biosciences building to allow for greater synergy and integration within the College'*.

- The Dean of the Faculty and the Head of School will continue to explore and work with relevant authorities to secure such space and to draw down money outstanding from the Department of Health and Children and HSE to support this initiative.

Addressing problems in the ratio of senior to junior staff

The Faculty Dean and the Head of School accept the reviewers' comments '*that the ratio of academic staff within senior grades compared with those employed at lower levels be urgently addressed*'. The Faculty Dean and Head of School acknowledges the reviewers' rationale and recommendations '*that the School should seek to resolve this problem by 'growing its own' and promoting staff from within the existing establishment*'.

-A range of initiatives is currently in place both within the School and at College level to mentor and prepare staff. Strategic initiatives include a Director of Staff Education and Development, mentorship offered through the visiting professorship programme, and the annual PMDS which the Head of School considers critical in supporting effective staff development. More recent additional initiatives at College including the Junior and Senior Mentorship programme are welcomed by the School. However funding of these positions will be highly dependent on College moving forward and rolling out the proposed Resource Planning Model and on securing funding for Postgraduate Research activity. The School is also committed to perusing the appointment of Joint chairs with HSPs as previously agreed. The Dean of the Faculty believes that the review highlighted an important issue which must be addressed as a matter of urgency in order to sustain development and assist the School to move to the next level.

Final Comments

- We appreciate the thoughtful review we have received,
- We welcome its recognition of what has already been achieved and its endorsement of the key activities outlined in the School's strategic plan,
- We feel encouraged by suggested directions for the improvement of the student experience,
- We look forward to engagement with College around addressing the challenges the reviewers highlighted in postgraduate funding, promotion of junior faculty and the greater valuing of both clinical linkages and of teaching and clinical practice critical and unique to excellence in a School of Nursing and Midwifery.

Our School emerges strengthened by the review and the plans we have developed to address the issues raised.

Prof. Mary McCarron
Head of School of Nursing & Midwifery
26th July 2010

Prof. Colin O Morain
Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences