



**Trinity College Dublin**  
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath  
The University of Dublin

**Report to Council on the  
Quality Review of the School of  
Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical  
Sciences**

**6-8 December 2016**

**Reviewers:**

Prof. Ijeoma F. Uchegbu, University College London, UK  
Prof. James McElnay, Queen's University Belfast, N. Ireland  
Prof. John L. Wallace, University of Calgary & Antibe Therapeutics, Canada  
Prof. Peter M Fischer, University of Nottingham, UK

**Internal Facilitators:**

Prof. Martina Hennessy and Prof. Kevin M. Devine, Trinity

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# **1. Reviewers' Report**

## **Review of the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Trinity College, Dublin**

**Monday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2017**

### **Review Team**

**Professor Ijeoma F. Uchegbu – University College London, London,  
UK (Chairperson)**

**Professor James McElnay – Queen's University Belfast, Belfast, UK**

**Professor Peter Fischer – University of Nottingham, Nottingham, UK**

**Professor John Wallace – University of Calgary, Calgary, Canada**

## **Executive Summary**

The School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences Review team carried out the review over the months of November and December 2016. A site visit was preceded by the provision of documentation and a teleconference.

The Review team were impressed with the leadership of the School, the School's new undergraduate programme and the taught postgraduate programmes. Staff appeared to be collegiate and the taught students were very happy with the provision. The School has had to operate under significant financial pressure in recent years and this has impacted negatively on certain areas of activity.

### **Recommendations**

1. **Strategic Direction and Planning** – The School needs the support of College offices in the area of student recruitment and online education, in order to deliver on its strategic plan. It is also important for the appointment of the current Instructional Designer, located within the School, to be renewed.
2. **Organisation and Management** – The School needs to undertake succession planning to ensure that there is an unbroken chain of excellent leadership and clarify certain reporting lines (e.g. among the administration staff).
3. **Teaching and Learning** – There is an urgent need for the School to reduce student contact hours to allow research to flourish and an equally urgent need for the College to address the revenue allocation formula such that it serves as an incentive to develop new and grow existing programmes.
4. **Research Activity** – The School needs to give this area attention by incentivising staff and supporting staff to apply for and win research grants. A research culture of seminars, research group meetings and a graduate school like environment for its PhD students are vital at this point.
5. **Resources** - The College should consider providing funds for the appointment of at least two new members of academic staff in addition to current vacancies. Funds are urgently needed to pump prime research activities and maintain the equipment base.
6. **Communications and Marketing** – A communication and marketing strategy is required.

## **Introduction**

The School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Trinity College Dublin was established in 1977. Its core mission is to provide training to pharmacists and pharmaceutical scientists and to conduct high quality research in the pharmaceutical sciences and practice of pharmacy. The School has 23 academic staff (20.5 full time equivalents - FTEs), 10 staff in technical support roles (8.5 FTEs), and a further 9 staff in administrative roles (8 FTEs). The School is situated in a number of buildings in the centre of Dublin and is part of the Faculty of Health Sciences within the College.

The review team was selected by the College and the review process consisted of advance presentation of a self-assessment document prepared by the School, along with a number of appendices, a teleconference with the Reviewers, followed by a site visit (6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> December 2016). During the site visit the review team met various groups of staff and students, including senior College managers from outside the School. These meetings consisted of structured question and answer sessions in which the school ethos, procedures, programmes and practices were explored. The assessment of the quality of the School appears below together with recommendations for improvement where necessary.

## **Strategic Direction and Planning**

The School enjoys a good reputation in Ireland, is in the top 100 of the QS World University Rankings for its subject and has been really successful in managing the change to its resources as a result of the 2008 recession. The College suffered a 50% loss of revenue as a result of the recession and the School suffered a steep drop in its own internal grant as a direct consequence of this. The management of this situation by the School's senior managers is highly commended.

The School's strategic plan focuses on: a) increasing revenue by increasing the number of non-European Union (EU) students admitted to its courses and introducing monetised online courses, b) increasing research volume and quality by making new strategic senior appointments and implementing its research strategy, c) developing its new integrated (science and practice blending) pharmacy programme and d) forming mutually beneficial partnerships with external stakeholders and collaborators.

The School has done particularly well in developing its new pharmacy programme with clinical placements being offered in the early years and a fully integrated curriculum, plus inter professional learning being developed for the later years. The reviewers were given examples of how scientific concepts are made relevant to the profession of pharmacy through small student projects. The School has hired an excellent Instructional Designer who is implementing its online learning for the new course. The teaching team is particularly commended for the work done so far in developing this very modern course and the Integration Co-ordinator presented a clear vision of the desired aims of the new course. The School's new pharmacy programme is being accredited on a yearly basis by the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland and this accreditation process, while currently successful, has led to a significant increase in workloads. The School's collaboration with external bodies such as within the APPEL collaboration, which sources work experience placements, and its high powered Strategic Advisory Board, are commendable.

### ***Recommendations***

While academic leaders are crucial for the School, the senior appointments may prove challenging to fulfil and the School should consider internal promotions and recruitment of rising stars at the more junior level for some of these new posts. To assist the School in fulfilling its strategic plan, the School is advised to implement an annual staff appraisal system focused on the teaching, research and administrative goals of the School and that maps appropriately on to the School's strategic aims and objectives.

The key revenue generating areas of the strategic plan will only be fulfilled if there is full, professional and enthusiastic support from the relevant offices in the College.

The Global Relations Office is encouraged to engage with the School's aspiration to recruit sufficient numbers of non-EU students on to its taught postgraduate and research degree programmes. Only the Global Relations Office has the necessary regional intelligence surrounding student recruitment and as such the Global Relations Office should offer this professional service to the School. It is strongly recommended that the School and the Global Relations Office work together with clear recruitment targets.

The College provider of online education is advised to immediately work with the School to develop its monetised online content. It is acknowledged that the online

education provider works with only one financial model, but this has to change such that the School is appropriately served by the College online education provider. It is strongly recommended that a mutually agreeable financial framework be identified to enable the monetised online content to be developed and delivered, as this activity is vital to the School's Strategic Plan. The College is encouraged to extend the School's Instructional Designer's contract to beyond the current two year term in order to drive forward this area of activity.

## **Organisation and Management**

The School's management is organised into an Executive Committee and a number of other committees to report to the Executive Committee. We wish to note that the School's current leadership is outstanding.

### ***Recommendations***

The School is encouraged to re-examine the terms of reference of the Executive Committee, School Committee and the Programme Committee. The School is encouraged to ensure that the Programme Management Committee is headed by the staff member leading on delivery of the undergraduate programme. The Head of School is excellent in all aspects of research, teaching, and administration and crucially her academic leadership during a challenging financial period has been exemplary. However, the lack of an obvious leader in waiting is a major risk for the School and succession planning should be undertaken as soon as possible. The review committee urges the School to work with the School Administrative Manager to present the administrative team with a fully justified organisational chart with clear reporting lines for all administrative staff.

## **Teaching and Learning**

The new pharmacy course is accredited on a yearly basis, by the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland. So long as the course is delivered as planned, the course has the potential to become a leading course, worldwide, with scientific concepts expertly blended into the practice of pharmacy and with ground breaking cross disciplinary assessment procedures embedded within the course. The undergraduate and taught postgraduate students met by the review team were extremely enthusiastic about the taught courses and employment destinations are very good. Staff deliver high

numbers of student contact hours, are approachable and have a problem solving attitude. The postgraduate taught courses are high profile and demand is high.

### ***Recommendations***

The School is advised to prepare a work load model in order to ensure an equitable distribution of all research, teaching and administration deliverables. The School should consider appointing junior teaching fellows in order to free up staff time for research. The School should consider reducing the student contact hours by about 20% in order to free up staff time for research. One suggestion is to modularise all course content such that postgraduate students on different programmes may be taught together. The School is encouraged to ensure that APPEL has a safeguarding strategy (care of vulnerable individuals in isolated workplace situations) for students on professional placements. The College is encouraged to re-examine the internal revenue allocation procedures in order to incentivise both the growth of existing programmes and the development of new programmes. It is advisable for the School and College to consider the ways in which postgraduate demonstrators on undergraduate laboratories are remunerated, as there appears to be a differential system in operation and this is causing a degree of frustration.

### **Research Activity**

The School's research is managed via a School Research Committee with an Ethics Committee reporting to said committee. Research is divided into 5 themes and there are some extremely successful and world class researchers on the School's staff in the areas of materials science, disease mechanisms, targeted therapies, cell biology, medicines use, etc. However there is definitely a need to ensure that more staff are operating at a similar high research level. The School has also had successful well capitalised spin-out companies emerging from its research and has an entrepreneur-in-residence to encourage translation and commercialisation. The College is extremely supportive of the School's commercialisation efforts and undertakes patent filing on the School's behalf. A College fund also exists for equity investments into new spin-out companies. However it is apparent that research has suffered at the School following the changes in resource allocation and the recession with research student numbers falling by 40% over the past 5 years.

### ***Recommendations***

The School is advised to organise its research into a smaller number of themes/ research groups that map on to the local funders' priorities. These research groups are encouraged to work collaboratively to fund their research, inviting external collaborators into the groups to respond to specific calls and to submit applications that have been read and critiqued internally prior to submission. The Research Director should consider setting targets for these groups to encourage competition and activity (regular monthly seminars, regular data sharing events, away days, etc.). The School is advised to offer research sabbaticals to staff to enable them to develop their research portfolios.

The School is advised to develop a strategy for renewing and maintaining its equipment base as there appears to be no financial provision for new equipment and the maintenance of existing equipment does not appear to have a committed budget. Scientific equipment is vital to both teaching and research and hence must be maintained and renewed regularly.

It is important to reiterate the recommendation made in the 2009 external review on the provision of pump-priming funds to enable staff to develop research proposals with suitably compelling preliminary data. The School is strongly advised to actually implement this recommendation.

The School's research students require a formal graduate school-type setting. It is recommended that the Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) institute mandatory presentations for each student, mandatory external presentations in their final year at international meetings, a College electronic environment to access transferable skills training, a log book of training needs and periodic objective setting. The School should consider implementing a secondary research supervisor initiative for all postgraduate research students. The School would benefit from a mechanism to increase the number of PhD students in the School. A suitable target should be set for these PhD student numbers and it is recommended that the current numbers should at least be doubled. The provision of bench fees for students may assist staff in their PhD student recruitment activities and the School is encouraged to consider the provision of bench fees for PhD students. The School is encouraged to set up an informal mentoring scheme for its postdoctoral researchers, specifically aimed at careers advice. In essence there is the need for a renewal of the research culture at the School, such that junior researchers are supported to achieve their own research goals.

## **Resources**

The School receives a block grant from the College to support salaries and a non-pay grant to support its other activities. The latter has been reduced by 33% in the last 3 years. The College has provided funding to support the new pharmacy course. A change in the internal revenue allocation formula has led to a number of revenue sources being top sliced by the College, leaving the School short of funds. It is particularly unfortunate that funds accruing from taught postgraduate courses are no longer available to the School and the School has lost about €400,000 per annum. This has had a significant impact in the way the School is able to support research activities. The School resides in excellent accommodation that is modern and spacious. The School has plans to recruit senior staff, as the School needs a critical mass of academic leaders to support the Head of School and junior members of staff.

## ***Recommendations***

The College is encouraged to revisit the revenue allocation formula, as this recalibration is vital if the College wishes to incentivise the School to grow recruitment on its existing programmes, maintain the quality of its existing programmes and develop new programmes. The current revenue allocation formula poses a huge risk to the School's ability to meet its strategic goals. The School's high student to staff ratio is also impacting negatively on its ability to deliver on its non-teaching objectives. The College is advised to address this by funding at least two more full time academic staff posts with both teaching and research activity contracts, in addition to the current vacant positions. This is vital if the current student - staff ratio is at least to be maintained. The College is advised to improve its communication with the School so as to help the School's staff understand decision making at the College level.

The School's desire to appoint academic leaders is noted and is an excellent initiative. However should this prove difficult, the School should consider appointing academic leaders from the excellent staff already at the School and should consider appointing junior rising stars to academic appointments.

## **Administration**

The administration team is led by a School Administrative Manager who attends the School's high level committee meetings. The administration team offer support to various academic programmes and are involved in procurement and finance tasks.

### ***Recommendations***

As noted above, the School is encouraged to explicitly spell out reporting lines for the administration team as they are not clear at present. The College is advised to provide training for all staff on the new finance system such that they are able to work efficiently and independently with the system. The School is encouraged to appoint a junior administrator to carry out procurement tasks. This will free up the Chief Technical Officer, who is highly experienced in technical tasks.

## **Relationships and External Engagement**

The School has a number of external collaborations such as the APPEL collaboration for clinical skills training and through its postgraduate Hospital Pharmacy course for example. We would like to note that the work on the new pharmacy course and the implementation of early years clinical skills training is very commendable and must have involved significant planning and execution activities with external bodies. Research active academic staff also have a number of local and international collaborations. The School's Strategic Advisory Board is impressive and populated by high calibre external stakeholders.

### ***Recommendations***

There are no specific recommendations for improvement, other than those mentioned above with respect to research.

## **Communications and Marketing**

The School has a website and social media profile. A communication strategy was not specifically showcased.

***Recommendations***

The School is advised to develop a communication strategy. The School is also encouraged to ensure that the messages in the College prospectus are reflective of its recruitment needs.

## 2. Response from the Head of School

### Response from the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences to the Quality Review Report, dated Monday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2017

#### Introduction

The School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences welcome the report of the Quality Review team, and would like to thank the external reviewers for their commitment, insight, and constructive approach to the process. There was consensus amongst staff that the feedback received from the reviewers was fair, and useful to the School in determining our priorities and objectives moving forward.

The reviewers have, in their report, identified and acknowledged areas of strength in the School, with their recommendations addressing those limiting issues which will hinder us in achieving our full potential in terms of the School's strategy and longer-term development, if not adequately addressed.

#### Recommendations

**Strategic Direction and Planning:** The report highlights the need for additional support from College Offices in the areas of international student recruitment and online education, in order to deliver on the key revenue generating areas of the School's strategic plan (page 4). To this end, work is ongoing in terms of liaising with the Global Relations Office to meet international collaborations and student recruitment targets. Furthermore, the recommended renewal of the School's Instructional Designer's contract is welcomed by the School, and would greatly facilitate the expansion of online content in existing programmes and the development of new monetised continuing professional development courses.

**Organisation and Management:** The School welcomes the reviewers' extremely positive ("outstanding") appraisal of the School's leadership (page 5). It will also consider their recommendations regarding the various School Committees' terms of reference and preparation for the current Head's succession. The School is confident it has suitable candidates to take over from the current Head with proper planning, and that it has the opportunity through current and imminent recruitment to add to this pool. Moreover, restructuring of the administrative team and related reporting lines had already been discussed between the Head of School and School Administrative Manager prior to the reviewers' visit, with implementation already underway.

**Teaching and Learning:** The School was particularly pleased to learn of the reviewers' affirmation that the new M.Pharm. is on track to become a leading Pharmacy course worldwide (page 5) and that its postgraduate courses are also considered to be high profile and in much demand. The recommendation to reduce student/teaching contact hours is already being considered in the context of facilitating staff's research. The reviewers' identification of the urgent need for College to address the revenue allocation formula to Schools is also welcome. We agree that more funds generated by the School going back to the School would significantly improve our ability to implement the reviewers' recommendations in the area of teaching and learning (e.g. through the appointment of teaching fellows, teaching assistants).

**Research Activity:** The School acknowledges the need to give this area particular attention; it has been, and will continue to be very much to the forefront of the School's strategy over the coming year. Plans to increase the support provided to staff with respect to research opportunities and grant applications, are already in motion, in collaboration with College's Research Development Office. The reviewers' recommendation to introduce sabbaticals for academic staff and enhance the

School's support structures for its PhD students and postdoctoral researchers, are also considered key in increasing our research output. Prior to the review, the School had, in fact, already committed to implementing a sabbatical scheme for staff. We understand that a career development scheme for postdoctoral researchers is soon to be initiated and supported at the College level. Such a scheme was discussed, strongly supported and requested by the Faculty Executive, and the Dean in particular. More structured support for PhD students is already planned for at the School level, and captured in our Strategic Plan.

**Resources:** The School agrees with the reviewers assertion that the School's high student to staff ratio is also impacting negatively on its ability to deliver on its non-teaching objectives, and strongly supports the reviewers' recommendation that College should consider providing funds for the appointment of at least two new members of academic staff in addition to current vacancies (page 8). The School also agrees that funds are urgently needed to pump prime research activities and to renew/maintain the equipment base, as this is vital to both teaching and research. We would hope that College's new revenue allocation model would support proper resourcing of School activities and equipment and, if so, would be a major step towards implementing these recommendations.

**Administration:** As noted above, restructuring of the administrative team and related reporting lines had already been discussed between the Head of School and School Administrative Manager prior to the reviewers' visit, with implementation already underway. The reviewers' recommendation to appoint a junior administrator to carry out procurement tasks (page 9) ties in well with the additional administrative support needed to deliver on the recommendations listed under the Research Activity section, in freeing up the Chief Technical Officer's time to support lab-based activities.

**Relationships and External Management:** The School was pleased with the reviewers' positive assessment of this area, which accurately reflects the amount of effort and hard work that has been put in by staff to achieve this level of engagement with external bodies and related stakeholders.

**Communications and Marketing:** The reviewers identified that a communications and marketing strategy is required (page 10). On this, the School already maintains its own website as well as social media profiles on Facebook and Twitter, and issues a biannual newsletter circulated to all alumni (in collaboration with the Alumni Office). Our communications and marketing efforts are expected to be significantly enhanced with the help of the School's new Entrepreneur-in-Residence, and through the expansion of our liaisons with the pharmaceutical industry and School's alumni.

## **Conclusions**

The majority of issues raised by the reviewers in their report are already under consideration by the School, and are being addressed in collaboration with the respective College units (Faculty, Global Relations, Trinity Research and Innovation, etc.). The School management will carefully consider all elements of this report and determine the most suitable implementation plan according to the School's needs and strategy.

*Prof. Anne Marie Healy, Head of School,  
Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences,*

*27<sup>th</sup> February 2017*

### 3. Response from the Faculty Dean

#### School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences

##### Response to the External Review

##### Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences

I very much welcome the report of the Quality Review team, and the reviewers' recommendations provide a very useful road map for the school going forward. I am particularly pleased that many of the issues identified and their recommendations mirror a number of the key objectives outlined in the School's Strategic Plan 2014-2019.

The Review team were particularly impressed with the leadership of the School, and I very much support this finding. The recommendations of the review team regarding succession planning in order to maintain its strong leadership is a critical focus area within the School's Strategic Plan where the appointment of replacement posts for the Professor of Pharmacology, the Professor in Pharmaceutical Chemistry and a new appointment of a Professor in the Practice of Pharmacy have been agreed with the School Executive Committee.

I very much welcome the reviewers' positive affirmation of the new M. Pharm given the considerable workload that this entailed for staff members. I am particularly pleased with the review team's recommendation that the School reduce its direct contact hours in order to allow research to develop and flourish. I am pleased that the review team recognized that the School has had to operate under significant financial pressure in recent years and the negative impact that this has had on certain areas of activity in particular the School's research portfolio. As Dean, I have put supports in place to nurture research across all schools in the Faculty, and welcome this recommendation to further this endeavor. The suggestion that the School increase its vibrancy and research culture through the development of seminars, research groups, sabbatical leave for staff, and a supportive environment for its PhD students is also particularly welcome and something I strongly support.

The review team have highlighted that the School needs support from College offices in the area of student recruitment and online education; these are two areas where the Faculty has been working closely with College and I am grateful to the review team for highlighting this as a pressing issue for the School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences. While additional supports are required for online education, discussions are underway at College level to determine whether the appointment of specialized staff as Instructional Designers is the best use of resources.

The review team also highlighted the need to clarify certain reporting lines among the administrative staff, and I support the ongoing review of the administrative structures and reporting lines within the School to address this.

*Prof. Mary McCann.*