



**UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK**  
**NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND, CORK**  
**QUALITY ASSURANCE/QUALITY ENHANCEMENT**

**SCHOOL OF CLINICAL THERAPIES**

**PEER REVIEW PANEL REPORT**

**Academic Year 2016/17**



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## Peer Review Panel Members

Name	Position/Discipline	Institution
Dr Mary Hannon-Fletcher	Head, School of Health Sciences	Ulster University
Mr Art Burgess Kelleher ( <i>student representative</i> )	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year Medicine	University College Cork
Dr Carolyn Letts ( <i>Rapporteur</i> )	School of Education, Communication and Language Science	University of Newcastle
Professor John O'Halloran ( <i>Chair</i> )	Vice President for Teaching & Learning	University College Cork
Ms Michèle Power	Manager, Quercus Talented Students Programme	University College Cork
Dr Helen Pryce	School of Life & Health Sciences	Aston University
Dr Tadhg Stapleton	Occupational Therapy	Trinity College Dublin

### Timetable of the site visit

The timetable of the site visit is attached as Appendix A.

Additional meetings were arranged with the HR Manager and School Manager at the request of the Panel.

## Peer Review

### Methodology

The Panel acted as one, with each member leading in one or two areas and then each member reviewed and examined all the issues raised in the self-evaluation and during meetings and site visits.

### Site Visit

The Panel walked all the School space, with the exception of the space that was originally allocated in the Áras Watson building.

### Peer Review Panel Report

The Peer Review Panel report was drafted on each of the evenings and the main draft was prepared at the conclusion of the review. An external rapporteur, Dr Carolyn Letts, prepared the first draft with secretarial support from colleagues in the Quality Enhancement Unit. The final Panel Report was agreed by all Panel members.

## **Overall Analysis**

The Panel were impressed by the highly committed, dedicated and enthusiastic staff in the School. It was obvious to the Panel that staff are committed to high quality teaching and have demonstrated their flexibility and adaptability in responding to and managing sickness, leave, resignations and retirement to ensure the continued delivery of programmes. The Panel considered the staff to be extreme problem solvers, in responding to significant crises, and probably “close to the edge” in that the staffing sick leave, turnover, and complexity are not sustainable in maintaining quality offerings in the long term, leaving aside the ambition to introduce two new programmes in 2018.

The Panel were struck by the passion and commitment of the staff, particularly to their students, however, the level of sick leave and short and longer term staff shortages appears to be significant.

It is noteworthy that all programmes have been successfully professionally accredited. It wasn't clear to what extent the accreditation materials might have been used in the Self-Evaluation Report to avoid duplication of effort and time by the School. However, the preparation for this review presented an opportunity for self-evaluation, in a different context to that of professional accreditation, which appears to have been missed by the School; the Panel consider that this represents a lost opportunity to self-reflect on achievement and strengths as well as identify challenges and potential solutions for the future.

The feedback from external stakeholders was universally positive and it was clear that the graduates from the School are held in high esteem by the professions and stakeholders.

### ***Self-Evaluation Report***

The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) was significantly longer than required under the University's quality procedures. It provided a large amount of descriptive information that was not required or succinct, particularly relating to University policies and procedures. Information on workload was missing and the information presented on staff distribution and numbers of permanent posts was unclear. Overall the level of synthesis, analysis and self-reflection was low and did not reflect the School's strengths in programme provision as evidenced by successful accreditation, neither did it clearly reflect or articulate the challenges or opportunities for the School. It is unfortunate that the School did not fully capitalise on the opportunity afforded by the quality review process to self-reflect and to focus on strategic planning as one entity.

### ***SWOT Analysis***

The outcome of the School's away day was not fully evident within the SER and moving forward the Panel would encourage the School to collectively develop its self-reflective capacities. This may be achieved through curriculum days, research days and practice days for example, feeding into existing structures and drawing on support from the Quality Enhancement Unit and other central University sources, such as the Centre for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning (CIRTL), as appropriate.

### ***Benchmarking***

The rationale for the selection of the benchmarked institution was unclear. As the School develops an action plan in response to this Quality Review it should engage in a more relevant benchmarking exercise with comparator institutions, and other reference data and assessments (e.g. external review inputs from the accreditation processes, quality review exercise) to provide a reference point for developing its practices and approaches.

### ***Developments since last review***

The Self-Evaluation Report provided little or no evidence of reflection on the developments since the last quality review in 2009/10.

## **Findings of the Peer Review Panel**

### ***School details including staff and student profile***

The Panel heard from stakeholders that students were of a very high quality and showed a great deal of adaptability, optimism and resourcefulness in the course of their placements.

The overall staff position of the School was unclear from the Self-Evaluation Report. The Panel suggest that a comprehensive staffing review, with reference institutions, is undertaken and that the outcome used to develop a financial and staffing strategy / plan to redress current staffing and resource difficulties.

The Panel heard that there are significant delays between staff leaving and recruitment due to a significant backlog in Human Resources in dealing with their recruitment schedule; School staff were concerned that this delay represents a cynical move on the University's part to save resources. The Panel received clarification from the HR partner during the course of the review of the details and current status of the overall staffing profile including sick leave arrangements, vacancies and recruitment, plus the reasons behind apparent delays in recruitment. The Panel also were informed that members from the College management team (College Manager, Financial Analyst and HR partner) met weekly with the Head of School to support the School, particularly in regard to the setting up of new programmes in Physiotherapy and Radiography, at this challenging time.

The Panel heard from staff during the review that opportunities for sabbatical leave, support for research, and conference travel were limited. In discussion with the College Financial Analyst it was confirmed that there are resources, although modest, available in the School to support staff. The Panel recommend that the School (ideally via the role of School Manager) continue to maximise the existing resources and develop opportunities to support relevant and on-going professional academic development activities. Available resources should be divided transparently between the School's different departments or disciplines and a strategic fund set aside for staff development and other School developments.

Accreditation was recently confirmed for the BSc in Occupational Therapy by the Association of Occupational Therapists of Ireland (AOTI). However, the accreditation condition that *'the University will submit confirmation to AOTI that the staff-student ratio is in line with the AOTI requirement of 1:15'* should be of concern to both the School and the University.

### ***School Organisation & Planning***

The Panel recommend that a facilitated workshop take place to discuss the School vision and mission statement using a bottom-up approach. An ambitious articulation of a School vision would greatly benefit the School. It was of concern to the Panel that their meeting with the staff of the School was apparently the first time that all staff had been together in one room in its current composition.

The School should consider developing a staffing strategy in which topics such as recruitment and staff development, leadership development, and joint appointments with the HSE should be explored.

The School needs to review its workload allocation and develop a transparent workload model so that there is shared understanding of the loads carried by members of staff. Perhaps, a workshop with HR colleagues from the central HR department might help in clarifying the recruitment procedures and workload models used across the University. The Panel noted the lack of clarity with regard to the division of time across teaching, research, and administration.

### ***Strategic and curriculum planning***

There are very low numbers of international students in the School. The Panel believe that there is an opportunity to be explored, beyond financial gain, for the School, while being mindful of the potential labour intensive language requirements of international students in a clinical setting. In particular, international students bring an enrichment to the disciplines and the wider student cohorts in terms of diversity and tolerance. In addition, the increased creativity of students and higher achievement of outcomes are recognised benefits of internationalisation. However, any additional intake of students needs to be accompanied by a commitment from the University and College to ensure funding is available to recruit the appropriate level of staff to ensure compliance with professional body guidelines. Additionally an increase in students will also place additional pressure to source and support additional clinical placement requirements.

PhD student recruitment is potentially very important in terms of the School's unique position to offer the range of Clinical Therapies, and the potential for enabling wider networking and possibilities for research connections across and between its disciplines. Staff should be facilitated to develop their own research, including study for their own PhDs, in order to be in a strong position to develop the research capacity of the School and continue to recruit high quality students. As part of such staff development, the Panel recommend that consideration be given to increasing the level of mentoring and support for staff to complete their PhD. These mentors need not necessarily come from within the School, but can come from other health related areas.

The Panel were informed that two new programmes are due to come on stream in September 2018, the MSc in Physiotherapy and the MSc in Radiography. These are important strategic ventures for the College; however, such an expansion needs to be carefully considered in light of current staffing pressures, future staffing requirements, and the existing School structure and space. The School will be under pressure to deliver on these new programmes and will need significant support from the College.

### **Teaching, learning and assessment**

The programmes across the School are innovative and draw upon good pedagogical theory. The MSc in Audiology is the first of its kind in Ireland and represents an important opportunity to develop audiological practice in Ireland.

The Panel noted the considerable commitment and expertise among staff in the use of innovative teaching and learning methodologies that are entirely appropriate for use in professional health science programmes at University level. Curriculum content was well thought out and sequenced to effectively prepare the student for entry into professional practice and future postgraduate research.

The Panel identified two issues for further consideration in relation to the programmes offered by the School.

The MSc in Audiology is composed of 120 credits, of which 110 credits are taught and 10 credits are research only. The Panel is concerned about the programme configuration in terms of the overall balance between taught and independent research at graduate level within the programme.

The Panel queried why the contact time in the Paediatric Sensory Integration Clinic is not regarded as clinical practice and therefore credit-bearing. It noted that students are observing clinicians during this time. It is recommended that the School programme team re-address this issue with the professional accrediting body, value needs to be given to this important activity and these hours should surely contribute to clinical practice hours similar to the type of exposure obtained on a first year clinical placement.

### ***Research insofar as it impacts on teaching***

The Panel met with a range of students during the visit and noted that students enjoyed the research projects; students enjoyed doing the research projects themselves and really enjoyed research-led teaching.

It was apparent that the teaching approaches adopted had enabled students to be discerning users of research material and this was particularly clear in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of the programme.

### ***Student support (academic and pastoral)***

Students described many aspects of good practice across the teaching programmes. Students felt very well supported by the staff. There is a high level of mutual respect and this was evident from discussions with both staff and students.

The Panel noted that staff within the School were committed to their work in insuring that students progress through the various programmes and develop into fit-for-purpose graduates. Student development and progression to entry level professional graduates was evident to the Panel from meetings with staff, students and other stakeholders.

The Panel were concerned that some students can incur additional costs and are required to travel further for placement than other disciplinary areas. The Panel also acknowledge the difficulty in securing appropriate placement experiences for all students. Bearing that in mind, the Panel recommends that the School continues to manage students' expectations about placement. The Panel recommends that the School continues to ensure that students are aware, in advance of registration (via the medium of website, prospectus etc.) of the



potential additional travel and accommodation costs associated with placements outside the Cork environs.

### ***Student achievement and employability***

The School is graduating students who are fit for purpose, performing well on placement and meeting CORU regulatory requirements. The practice educators were very positive in their commentary and would be willing to employ students, on graduation. Students felt well-prepared for their placement and loved the experience. The role of the various practice education staff, and lines of communication, need to be clear to the students and there should be opportunities for all to provide confidential feedback.

The process of clinical evaluation and allocation of grades to practice education needs to be more transparent.

### ***Staff development***

School staff need to be encouraged to re-engage with normal academic processes and strategic and management decision-making, e.g. attendance at School Board. The staff of the School would benefit from being mobilised effectively as a group through some team building working. The School staff also need to be helped, through mentoring and training, to take responsibility proactively for their own professional academic development.

### ***Resources (staffing, physical, technical, other)***

The School space is very effective; cognate disciplines are in proximity and there is good teaching space. There appears to be a relatively generous amount of space available to the students by comparison to other health disciplines in the University.

The Panel suggest that there may be other ways to optimise the use of the available space; it may include the use of other spaces. The Panel recommend that the School explore the use of nearby rooms for consultations, and if necessary define consultation hours to facilitate access to staff.

The space originally allocated for Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy in Áras Watson should be made available to the School. The Panel recommend geographical proximity between the current disciplines in the School and the new programmes coming on board. Geographical proximity of the programmes will foster opportunities for shared learning and interdisciplinary learning (a requirement of CORU accreditation) between the disciplines, for example possible collaborative teaching between occupational therapy and physiotherapy, physiotherapy and audiology.

The Panel noted the exclusive use of space by disciplines, which in some instances did not seem at the time to be optimally used. This presents the risk of perpetuating disciplinary separation through the patterns of space use. The Panel consider it very important to ensure that inter-professional disciplinary interaction is encouraged from the earliest stages of students' programmes.

***Local quality assurance and enhancement activities, including those for student feedback and evaluation***

The Panel heard that students felt that the length of time between the submission of assignments and receipt of feedback could be improved.

***External relations***

There is a shortage of clinical placements in Audiology within the Republic of Ireland and some students are currently having to travel long distances and to the UK to attend placement. This reflects the important role of the programme in developing a local critical mass of quality practice and developing training and academic support. This requires careful short term management to ensure students have access to an appropriately wide range of audiology service provision and expertise.

***Case Study of Good Practice***

The Panel acknowledge the use of problem-based and task-based learning approaches in the School and the expertise of staff in delivering these applied teaching and learning methodologies.

There is a range of good practice taking place in the School and the Panel would encourage the School to articulate this in the form of a short case study (max 2 pages). The Panel recommend working with CIRTl and the Quality Enhancement Unit to produce the case study. There is an opportunity for the School to showcase good work and to be seen as experts in this area and a potential resource/mentor for others in the University attempting to introduce such teaching and learning approaches.

***Confirmation that programme provision is still located correctly on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)***

- BSc (Hons) Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy
- BSc (Hons) Speech and Language Therapy
- MSc Audiology (clinical)
- MSc Evidenced Based Therapy Practice
- MSc by Research
- PhD

The Panel agree that all programmes are located correctly on the NFQ. However, the Panel recommends a reassessment of the MSc in Audiology, specifically in regard to its research component.

***Compliance with European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area – Part 1***

The School is in compliance.

### **Recommendations to the School** *(in order of importance)*

- The Panel recommend that a facilitated workshop take place to develop a School vision and mission statement using a bottom-up approach. The School should also consider evolving management structures in view of the new programmes coming on board.
- The Panel recommend that the School consider having a curriculum day to open up connectivity between disciplines.
- The Panel recommend that the School develop a policy on placement allocation. The School should provide clarity on all potential logistics and costs should be provided in advance. The School should draw on the University policy on student placement in preparing this policy.
- The Panel recommend that the School keep under review the arrangements for placement including training of Clinical Educators, induction, transparency of assessment procedures, and preparation for placement.
- The Panel recommend that a more detailed student charter be developed containing clear statements about assessment, to provide finer details which are not possible within the Book of Modules.
- The Panel recommend that expectations regarding the timing of all assignment and exam feedback be clarified and ideally in such time that students can benefit from the feedback.
- The Panel recommend that clarity is provided for students on how practice education assessment is translated into a grade and how they are moderated 'in house'.
- The Panel recommend that a review of the MSc in Audiology take place. The Panel recommend a review of programme structure to ensure a greater research component in line with University requirements for Masters programmes and to ensure that the content of the course optimises opportunities for graduates to work internationally.
- The Panel recommend that the Association of Occupational Therapists of Ireland (AOTI) accreditation condition that *'the University will submit confirmation to AOTI that the staff-student ratio is in line with the AOTI requirement of 1:15'* should be a matter for action by both the School and the College<sup>1</sup>.
- The Panel recommend that the School (ideally via the role of School Manager) continue to maximise the existing resources and develop opportunities to support relevant and on-going professional academic development activities. Available resources should be divided transparently between the School's different departments or disciplines and a strategic fund set aside for staff development and other School developments.
- The Panel recommend that the School encourage and mentor staff to pursue PhD by publication as well as through supervision from the wider College.
- The Panel recommend that the School explore having an internationalisation person responsible for liaison between the School, the College and the wider University.
- The Panel recommend that the School look creatively at the space available.

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<sup>1</sup> Recommendation for both the School and the College

- The Panel recommend that the School consider carefully the professional regulatory requirements for new programmes. The Panel recommend that the Occupational Therapy programme re-negotiate with the professional accrediting body to have student hours in the sensory integration clinic credited as practice education/fieldwork hours.
- The Panel recommend that a HR facilitator work with the School to consider staffing issues.
- The Panel recommend sharing of good practice and exploring the commonalities between the departments and look to develop inter-professional learning opportunities across the disciplines.
- The Panel recommend that the School work with CIRTl and the Quality Enhancement Unit to produce the case study of good practice.

#### **Recommendations to the College** *(in order of importance)*

- The Panel recommend that the governance structure needs to enable the School to be effective. The College should support the School to unblock barriers, incentivise them and encourage them to connect to the wider university. This is particularly important in light of the expansion of the School in the very near future.
- The Panel recommend that the College ensure that existing processes for the appointment of Head of School are consistently utilised.
- The Panel recommend that the College further support the Head of School and consider succession planning.
- The Panel recommends that the budget should be provided to the School and then distributed across the disciplines and programmes, with some top slice at School level to support staff development, strategic developments and priming research.
- The Panel recommend that the Association of Occupational Therapists of Ireland (AOTI) accreditation condition that *'the University will submit confirmation to AOTI that the staff-student ratio is in line with the AOTI requirement of 1:15'* should be a matter for action by both the School and the College.
- The Panel recommend that the College honour its commitment to the School vis-à-vis the space that was assigned to them in Áras Watson. Space should be used to support the interdisciplinary nature of the School for the existing and new programmes.
- The Panel recommends that the facilities for the new MSc in Physiotherapy and Radiography should be physically located in close proximity to the existing School of Clinical Therapies to maximise cohesion and sharing of resources.
- The Panel recommend that the College review the balance of research in the Masters programme in Audiology.

### **Recommendations to the University** *(in order of importance)*

The Panel advises that the Quality Enhancement Committee should examine the operational effectiveness of the internal quality review process, paying particular attention to:

- The processes of self-evaluation and development of the SER;
- Effective and efficient tailoring of reviews to ensure alignment with external professional accreditation;
- The required supports, for units under review, from College, Quality Enhancement Unit and other support areas;
- The value of an evaluation framework for ongoing QA/QE;
- Consideration should be given to provided secretariat support for review panels;
- Ensuring that the Guidelines for Review are reflective of university equality and diversity principles e.g. Athena Swan.

## Appendix A - Timetable

### School of Clinical Therapies – Peer Review Panel site visit

<b>Tuesday 25 April 2017</b>	
12.00 – 13.30	<p>Convening of members of the Peer Review Panel.</p> <p>Lunch and briefing by Director of Quality Enhancement and Administrative Officer, Quality Promotion Unit.</p>
13.30 – 14.30	<p>Private meeting of the Panel.</p> <p>Panel agree issues to be explored in meetings with Head of School, Head of College and Stakeholders</p>
14.30 – 15.30	<p>Meeting with Head of School</p> <p>Discussion regarding development to date, strategic priorities of the School and overview of educational provision.</p>
15.30 – 16.00	Meeting with Senior Vice President Academic & Registrar
16.00 – 16.50	<p>Meeting with Acting Head of College</p> <p>Panel discuss College strategy and priorities. The links between College/School financial resource allocations process, staffing resources and infrastructure.</p>
17.00 – 18.00	<p>Meeting with Stakeholders</p> <p>Panel meet with past graduates, placement providers, employers of graduates and other stakeholders as appropriate to discuss views on the quality of education received and the quality of the graduates.</p> <p>Representative from Health Services Executive (HSE)  Audiology Manager, South Infirmary Victoria University Hospital  Primary Care Service Manager, Cork and Kerry, HSE  Representative from Cork University Hospital  Day Rehabilitative Service Manager, Headway  Director, The Sunflower Clinic  Representative from COPE Foundation  Representative from Fermoy Primary Care</p>
19.00	Informal dinner for members of the Peer Review Panel & staff members of School of Clinical Therapies

<b>Wednesday 26 April 2017</b>	
09.00 – 09.15	Convening of Peer Review Panel

09.15 – 10.15	Meeting with staff of School of Clinical Therapies Panel and staff from the School discuss issues such as teaching/learning, curriculum & assessment.
10.15 – 10.45	Tea/coffee
10.45 – 11.30	Enhancing Student Learning Experience Discussion of School's approaches to enhancement of student learning experience including case-study of good practice, teaching & learning initiatives.  Lecturer, Dept of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy Head of School of Clinical Therapies Lecturer, Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences Senior Lecturer, Dept of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy Head of Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences
11.45 – 12.15	Tour of facilities
12.30 – 12.45	Meeting with College HR Manager
12.45 – 13.30	Lunch and private meeting of PRG
13.30 – 14.00	Representatives of 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> year students  Year 1, BSc OT – 2 x student representatives Year 2, BSc OT – 2 x student representatives Year 1, BSc SLT Year 2, SLT
14.05 – 14.35	Representatives of 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> year students  Year 3, BSc OT – 2 x student representatives Year 4, BSc OT – 2 x student representatives Year 4, BSc SLT – 2 x student representatives
14.40 – 15.10	Representatives of Postgraduate students  PhD candidate Year 1, MSc AU – 2 x student representatives Year 2, MSc AU – 3 x student representatives
15.10 – 15.30	Tea/coffee
15.30 – 16.15	Meeting with:  Research Officer (National Programmes), Research Support Services, Office of Vice-President for Research & Innovation Manager, Centre for the Integration of Research Teaching & Learning
16.15 – 16.45	Meeting with College Financial Analyst

19.00	Working private dinner for members of the Peer Review Panel to commence drafting of report.
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<b>Thursday 27 April 2017</b>	
08.30 – 09.00	Convening of Peer Review Panel
09.00 – 09.30	Meeting with Head of School Clarification and discussions of main findings by the Panel
09.30 – 10.00	Meeting with School Manager
10.00 – 10.30	Tea/coffee
10.45 – 11.15	Exit presentation to all staff, to be made by the Chair of the Peer Review Panel or other member of the Panel as agreed, summarising the principal findings of the Panel.  This presentation is <u>not</u> for discussion at this time.
11.15 – 14.00	Further work on drafting of the final report (lunch)
14.00	Reviewers depart