



Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland

Summary Report of the Statutory Visit to the Level 8 BSc Pharmacy Degree Course at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland

***In accordance with Part 3, Rule 7(1) of the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (Education and Training) Rules
2008***

And

Article 7(2) of the Pharmacy Act 2007

28/29 November 2012

i. Introduction

Stemming from the Pharmacy Act 2007 (as amended) and recognised in Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament of the Council on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications, the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (PSI, the pharmacy regulator) has responsibility and powers for the approval of the programmes of education and training of pharmacists in Ireland.

It is the intention to move from the present 4-year Bachelor degree in pharmacy, plus a 1-year pre-registration internship, to a fully integrated 5-year Masters degree in pharmacy. The present accreditation concerns the re-accreditation of the 4-year BSc in Pharmacy delivered by the School of Pharmacy, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) against the PSI's Interim Accreditation Standards for the level 8 Bachelor degree awarded on the successful completion of the 4 year undergraduate pharmacy degree programme approved by the Council of the PSI on 28 March 2012. Subsequent to graduation with a Bachelor degree in pharmacy from one of the three schools of pharmacy, interns currently undergo the National Pharmacy Internship Programme (NPIP), consisting of experience in a pharmacy practice setting under the supervision of an approved tutor, plus a programme of blended learning delivered mainly on a distance learning basis. Successful completion of the NPIP leads to the award of the MPharm degree.

ii. Process of review

The visit

The accreditation visit took place on 28th and 29th November 2012 at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, Dublin and was based on documentation submitted by the provider. The accreditation team met in private on 27th November 2012 at the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland, Block A, 11-12 Hogan Place, Grand Canal Street, Dublin 2.

The accreditation team

The PSI accreditation team comprised:

Name	Designation at the time of visit
Professor Robert Sindelar	Team leader, Dean and Professor of the Faculty of Pharmacy, University of British Columbia, Canada
Mr Philip Green	Former Deputy Secretary & Registrar and Director of Education and Registration, Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, UK
Dr Paul Gard	Deputy Head of School, University of Brighton School of Pharmacy and Biomedical Sciences, UK
Mr Eoghan Hanly	Vice President of the Council of the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland
Mr Stephen McMahon	CEO of Irish Patients' Association
Dr Conor McCrystal	Community pharmacist
along with	
Dr Lorraine Horgan	Head of Professional Development & Learning, PSI
Professor Ian Marshall	Rapporteur, Interim Director of Pharmacy, University of Lincoln, UK

There were no declarations of interest.

The standards

The interim standards for the Level-8 Bachelor degree are arranged under the following headings:

Standard 1 – Pharmacy School and Mission

Standard 2 – Leadership, Organisation and Governance

Standard 3 – Graduates

Standard 4 – Curriculum

Standard 5 – Teaching and Learning Strategy

Standard 6 – Assessment Strategy

Standard 7 – Students

Standard 8 – Resources

Standard 9 – Quality Assurance

The programme

The BSc programme is arranged in three learning cycles: the Junior Cycle in Year 1, the Intermediate Cycle in Years 2 and 3, and the Senior Cycle in Year 4. The programme is made up of a total of eight semesters over the four-year programme. Each semester comprises 12 direct-contact teaching weeks, plus study and assessment time. With the exception of Semester 1 of the Senior Cycle, each semester consists of 6 modules. The modular structure conforms to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). Most modules carry 5 credits with one 10 credit module per year. The Research Skills Development module in the final year carries 15 credits. Students study modules equivalent to 30 credits per semester, a total of 240 credits over the four-year programme. Modules comprise lectures, tutorials, workshops, laboratory classes, assignments, directed study programmes, assessments and private study. The blend of these varies according to the requirements of each module. The total taught component of the degree course is 3,000 hours. The student is expected to spend an equivalent period in private study (giving a total of 6,000 hours). The total student workload per year then is estimated at 1500 hours, equivalent to 25 working hours per credit.

Meeting the standards

Standard 1 – Pharmacy School and Mission. The accreditation team agreed that this standard was met. The School of Pharmacy Strategic Plan 2013-2018 has been aligned to the RCSI Institutional Strategy 2012-2017. The strategic goals of the School were stated as excellence in education, internationalisation of the student population, impactful research and innovation, enhanced School capabilities, and strong strategic partnerships. The accreditation team observed evidence for the progress towards the realisation of the above goals in the thoughtful consideration of the challenges for the future of pharmacy education, the links with overseas institutions, the impressive research portfolio, the progressive development of the School, and the strong links to hospitals and other healthcare provision in Ireland.

Standard 2 – Leadership, Organisation and Governance. The accreditation team agreed that this standard was met. The overall governance of the College relevant to the School of Pharmacy is that the School reports to Academic Council which in turn reports to the Medicine and Health Sciences Board and upwards to the College Council. The Head of School is responsible for the effective general management of the School, for ensuring the provision of academic leadership and strategic vision, and for the quality of the student experience. As the budget holder the Head of School is financially accountable to the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences. The responsibilities of the Head of School include strategic and budgetary planning, staffing, management of the School's programme of teaching and research, implementation of the College's Academic Policy, representing the School internally, including on relevant governance committees and externally where relevant. In addition, a Programme Director has delegated responsibility for undergraduate teaching in the School, incorporating general management of the undergraduate teaching programme, including development and maintenance of relevant policies and procedures, promotion of best practice and innovation in teaching and development of overall policy with regard to teaching programmes. The accreditation agreed that the leadership of the School was an area of strength.

Standard 3 – Graduates. The accreditation team agreed that this standard was met. Interns and recent graduates interviewed spoke highly of the level of provision and the support received from the teaching and administrative staff during the programme. Graduates and interns considered that they had been well-prepared for practice from a practical point-of-view and felt that no part of the programme had been irrelevant. They considered themselves well-

prepared to enter the NPIP, any area of pharmacy and eventual practice but agreed that more experiential learning during the BSc programme would have been advantageous.

Standard 4 – Curriculum. The accreditation team agreed that this standard was met. The Head of School considered that the curriculum was in some need of structural modification and indicated that this would take place in the near future. The accreditation team agreed that the large number of small modules was likely to make difficult students' integration of knowledge. However, students interviewed did not indicate difficulty in relating the underpinning basic science to the professional practice of pharmacy and told the accreditation team that the relevance of the material presented was always emphasised.

Standard 5 – Teaching and Learning Strategy. The accreditation team agreed that this standard was met. A patient-centred focus is developed through pharmacy practice teaching being introduced from the outset of the programme with the aim of ensuring that graduates enter the NPIP with the requisite clinical knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes. Graduates interviewed confirmed that this aim was achieved. The curriculum encourages the development of team-working, communication and problem-solving skills. Students are encouraged to become independent learners as a basis for lifelong learning and future professional CPD requirements. The research expertise of the School informs the teaching and students undertake a substantial research project in the Senior Cycle. The integration of the School of Pharmacy into a medical college facilitates interdisciplinary learning which takes place with medical and physiotherapy students. Students interviewed considered themselves well-integrated into the College with both social and professional interaction with other students of the College.

Standard 6 – Assessment Strategy. The accreditation team agreed that this standard was met. Assessment methods consisted of multiple choice questions, short notes, essays, practical and dispensing examinations, OSCEs and projects. All assessments were required to be fit for purpose, valid, reliable and transparent. The School uses a blueprinting approach to ensure that the assessment methodology is appropriate to the taught curriculum and to the relevant learning outcomes. The School takes great care to assess professionalism through students conforming to a code of conduct, the use of a yellow card system in OSCEs and the completion of an electronic portfolio to encourage reflective practice. External examiners play an integral role in the whole assessment process.

Standard 7 – Students. The accreditation team agreed that this standard was met. The team learned that the College does not interview CAO applicants to the BSc Pharmacy programme, but selects purely on the basis of second level education performance. However it does interview prospective entrants via both the graduate entry route and international routes. It was noted that the School of Pharmacy had found no correlation between performance in the degree and presentation of chemistry or biology school qualifications, or of pharmacy being the students' first choice higher education subject. Students interviewed, interns and recent graduates all spoke highly of the provision and of their preparedness to enter practice. The accreditation team was told of the plans, subject to a feasibility study, to increase student numbers by 10 students per year over the next few years, leading to an eventual doubling of student numbers; this would be achieved mainly through recruitment of international students.

Standard 8 – Resources. The accreditation team agreed that this standard was met. The College is a private institution that receives limited government funding and it is otherwise dependent on income from student fees. The accreditation team was concerned by the apparent financial deficit being carried by the School. However, the team was assured by senior College management representatives that the School of Pharmacy, although only established 10 years ago, was an important and integral part of the College's structure and as such its financial standing and sustainability were secure. The accreditation team was impressed by the dedication and hard work of the teaching staff but was concerned at the perceived level of workload and the resultant possibility of staff burn-out particularly given the plans to double student numbers over the forthcoming years. The team was told that the College was embarking on a workload analysis. The accreditation team was able to view the facilities of the College and School of Pharmacy, and agreed that all the facilities observed were suitable for purpose.

Standard 9 – Quality Assurance. The accreditation team agreed that this standard was met. Programme evaluation within the College is carried out by the Quality Enhancement Office. Two types of quality review are involved, statutory Institutional Reviews of the College conducted periodically by independent international teams and internal rolling reviews of Schools. Additionally, the accreditation team was impressed by the presentation and thorough analysis of student module feedback.

Conclusions and recommendations

The accreditation team agreed that the BSc Pharmacy degree delivered by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland met all the standards approved by the Council of the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland on 28 March 2012. Accordingly, the accreditation team agreed to recommend to the Council of the PSI that the BSc Pharmacy degree be accredited for a period of 5 years subject to the following recommendations:

- Based on the planned curriculum revision, expansion of student enrolment and related staff recruitment during this 5-year period, that the PSI Council should give serious consideration to a process of assurance and validation of continued compliance with all accreditation standards and that the School will comply with this process.
- To develop a formal and well-reasoned assessment and quality improvement strategy for any and all practice-based learning experiences as the curriculum is enhanced.

The team identified a number of strengths of and challenges for the School as follows:

Strengths:

- A supportive institution with congruent vision for pharmacy education
- Strong collegiality and leadership in the school and the institution
- Enthusiastic and motivated staff and students
- The relational curriculum map and laboratory databases
- The assessment policy and quality assurance including student feedback and the environment created
- An appropriate level of research and inquiry involvement with students and teaching staff in a multidisciplinary context
- The institution's vision for interdisciplinary and interprofessional learning, and research with pharmacy's strength and contribution obvious.
- The School's recognition of the limitations of the current programme in today's modern health care system.
- Efforts to move patient-centred care to the forefront of students' learning and understanding
- The value placed on scholarship of teaching and learning

Challenges:

- To avoid staff burnout due to the demands of the teaching and development of a new curriculum
- To develop a clear business plan and implementation plan for the expansion of School enrolment
- To develop a clear and sustainable plan for building a successful experiential learning environment
- To effectively link investment to the strategic plan goals and human resources needs