



## **Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland**

### **Summary Report of the Statutory Visit to the Level 8 Bachelor of Pharmacy Degree Course at University College Cork**

***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***

**19-20 February 2013**

## **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 (MPharm). The present accreditation concerns the re-accreditation of the 4-year BPharm degree delivered by the School of Pharmacy, University College Cork (UCC) 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 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> February 2013 at University College Cork, and was based on documentation submitted by the provider. The accreditation team met in private on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2013 at the River Lee Hotel, Cork.

## The accreditation team

The PSI accreditation team comprised:

| Name                       | Designation at the time of visit   |
|----------------------------|--|
| Professor William Dawson   | Team leader, former academic and industrial pharmacist, Bionet Ltd.  |
| Professor Anne-Marie Healy | Professor of Pharmaceutics and Pharmaceutical Technology, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, University of Dublin, Trinity College. |
| Mr Philip Green            | Former Director of Development and of Education and Registration, Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, UK.                             |
| Dr Conor McCrystal         | Community pharmacist.  |
| Mr Eoghan Hanly            | Vice President of the Council of the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland.  |
| Ms Mary Culliton           | Former Director of Advocacy, Quality and Patient Safety Directorate, healthcare consultant.  |
| Professor Claude Mailhot   | Professor of Pharmacotherapy, Faculte de Pharmacie, Universite de Montreal, Canada.  |
| Professor Jane Portlock    | Professor of Pharmacy Education, University College London School of Pharmacy.   |
| along with                 |  |
| Dr Lorraine Horgan         | Head of Professional Development & Learning, PSI.  |
| Professor Ian Marshall     | Rapporteur, Interim Director of Pharmacy, University of Lincoln, UK.   |

## **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 UCC BPharm programme is arranged over four years with each year of study carrying 60 credits. There is a strong emphasis on providing a scientific foundation in the earlier years of the programme followed by a progression towards more clinically-relevant study in the senior years. There is a very strong emphasis on pharmaceutical chemistry in the first two years of the programme. Pharmacy practice is introduced from the outset of the programme and continues through all years. Most of the teaching is carried out by the School of Pharmacy with some teaching on anatomy and pathophysiology, biochemistry, molecular biology, microbiology and clinical immunology taught by cognate schools in the College of Medicine and Health. The modular structure conforms to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). Most modules carry 5 or 10 credits with one 15-credit module per year in the first three years and a 20-credit module on clinical practice in the final year. 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 or directed component of the degree course is in excess of 3,000 hours. Greater than 50% of this is in theoretical instruction of which more than 35% comprises practical training. More than

one-third covers actions, uses and manufacture of drugs and medicines. The programme content and delivery is consistent with the EU Directives 2001/83/EC and 2005/36/EC.

## **Meeting the standards**

**Standard 1 – Pharmacy School and Mission.** The accreditation team agreed that this standard had been met. The School of Pharmacy Strategic Plan 2013-2017 has been aligned to both the UCC Institutional Strategy and the Strategic Goals of the College of Medicine and Health. The strategic objectives of the School were stated as development of research, lifelong learning and continuing professional development (CPD), an Academic Healthcare Centre, e-learning and novel methods of teaching, income generation, development of undergraduate and Masters programmes, and the promotion of the School through alumni and a 10-year anniversary event. The accreditation team observed evidence for the progress towards the realisation of the above goals in the consideration of the challenges for the future of pharmacy education, the impressive research portfolio, the progressive development of the School, and the efforts to develop 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 Board reports to the College of Medicine and Health and then upwards to the University Academic Board. 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 Head of the College of Medicine and Health. 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 University's policies, representing the School internally, including on relevant governance committees and externally where relevant. The Head of School, who is also the BPharm Programme Director, is supported by a School Executive comprising the subject area leaders that reports to the School Board. The School Board, comprising all members of the School, is the primary decision-making body of the School. Amongst several committees reporting to the School Board are the BPharm Programme Board, which includes representation from cognate teaching units in the College of Medicine and Health, and the Teaching and Learning Committee. The accreditation team recognised the difficulties of managing a comprehensive committee structure with a relatively small staff complement. The team also noted that the succession plans to appoint a new professor who would be expected to take on the role of Head of School later in the current year.

**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 staff during the programme. They considered themselves well-prepared to enter the NPIP and eventual practice but suggested that more and earlier experiential learning and a lesser emphasis on chemistry teaching during the BPharm programme would have been advantageous.

**Standard 4 – Curriculum.** The accreditation team agreed that this standard was met. Staff members of School agreed that the curriculum was in some need of structural modification, particularly in relation to the amount and type of chemistry teaching and indicated that after seeking external guidance this would take place in the near future. The accreditation team noted that attempts were being made to introduce more integrated approaches to teaching and learning through systems-based modules. Students and graduates appreciated the value and purpose of the underpinning basic science to the professional practice of pharmacy; they and teaching staff members told the accreditation team that the relevance of material to pharmacy was always emphasised. Students nevertheless expressed a strong desire for more experiential learning; this is currently gained mainly through non-mandatory vacation and weekend work.

**Standard 5 – Teaching and Learning Strategy.** The accreditation team agreed that this standard was met. An attempt to create a patient-centred focus is developed by 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 substantial research expertise of the School informs the teaching and students undertake a research project in the final year. The School has organised a number of interprofessional learning sessions with medical students.

**Standard 6 – Assessment Strategy.** The accreditation team agreed that this standard was met. A variety of assessment techniques are used systematically and sequentially throughout the programme. This includes mid-term MCQ and short answer examinations, practical examinations, marks for performance in laboratory sessions, workshops and site visits, group projects, presentations and OSCEs, placements, final year projects, written papers and oral examinations where appropriate. In particular, extensive use is made of both formative and summative OSCEs.

**Standard 7 – Students.** The accreditation team agreed that this standard was met. Other than mature student applicants for the BPharm programme, the School does not interview any other prospective entrants, but selects purely on the basis of second level school performance. Students interviewed, interns and recent graduates all spoke highly of the provision and of their preparedness to enter practice. However, students had not had any involvement in the planning and implementation of programme developments.

**Standard 8 – Resources.** The accreditation team agreed that this standard was met. The accreditation team was assured by senior University management representatives that the School of Pharmacy, although only established 10 years ago, was an important and integral part of the University and as such its financial standing and sustainability were secure despite the severe current budgetary restrictions. The accreditation team was impressed by the dedication and hard work of the teaching staff but was concerned at the apparent heavy workload. The team was told that the University was developing a workload model. The accreditation team was able to view the facilities of the School of Pharmacy, and agreed that all the facilities for both teaching and research observed were outstanding and eminently suitable for purpose.

**Standard 9 – Quality Assurance.** The accreditation team agreed that this standard was met subject to compliance with the condition outlined below, although the team agreed that the management of quality assurance procedures was insufficiently robust and could benefit from a greater degree of implementation oversight. The team recognised that the School had devised a quality improvement plan to ensure that any issues highlighted by the Peer Review Group were acted upon. However, some elements of the School 2009 Quality Improvement Plan had not been implemented. The team also noted that some aspects of the management of teaching were entrusted to individuals rather than there being a School policy. The team learned that the University and College of Medicine and Health is developing a Fitness to Practise policy that will be the same for all the Schools within the College but which will be implemented at School level. Due to the small size of the School of Pharmacy, there will be supporting expertise made available from the College. Although the team was assured that the Fitness to Practise policy will be extant from the start of the 2013-14 academic year, it will be a **condition** of accreditation that the University inform the PSI of its implementation within the next twelve month period.

## Conclusions and recommendations

The accreditation team agreed that the BPharm degree delivered by the University College Cork 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 BPharm degree be accredited for a period of 5 years subject to the following condition:

- that the University inform the PSI of the implementation of its Fitness to Practise Policy for pharmacy students within the next twelve month period (this relates to Standard 9.3).

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

### Strengths:

- A committed and enthusiastic staff
- The effective use of teacher-practitioners in the delivery of the BPharm programme
- The active engagement of research in the teaching provision
- World class facilities for teaching and research

### Challenges:

- To move opportunities for structured and systematic public and patient contact to earlier in the programme
- To develop a sustained and systematic, quality assured placement programme
- To develop further opportunities for pharmacy students to learn alongside students of other healthcare professions
- To initiate student involvement in the degree development process