



Report of the On-Site Compliance Visit to  
the Five-Year Integrated Master's Degree Programme  
in Pharmacy provided by University College Cork

January 2019

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Master's Degree Programme in Pharmacy provided by University  
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*In accordance with Article 7(2) of the Pharmacy Act 2007*

*and*

*Part 3, Rule 8(1) of the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (Education and Training)  
(Integrated Course) Rules 2014 [S.I. No. 377 of 2014]*

January, 2019

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## Glossary of Abbreviated Terms

▪ APPEL	:	Affiliation for Pharmacy Practice Experiential Learning
▪ CCF	:	Core Competency Framework for Pharmacists
▪ DARE	:	Disability Access Route to Education
▪ ECTS	:	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
▪ HEAR	:	Higher Education Access Route
▪ HEI	:	Higher Education Institution
▪ IPL	:	Interprofessional Learning
▪ KPI	:	Key Performance Indicators
▪ MPharm		Master of Pharmacy Degree
▪ NFQ	:	National Framework of Qualifications
▪ NPIP	:	National Pharmacy Internship Programme
▪ NUI	:	National University of Ireland
▪ OSCE	:	Objective Structured Clinical Examination
▪ PDP	:	Professional Development Planning
▪ PE	:	Practice Educator
▪ PRE	:	Professional Registration Examination
▪ PSI	:	Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland
▪ STEMM	:	Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine
▪ TCD	:	Trinity College Dublin
▪ UCC	:	University College Cork
▪ VLE	:	Virtual Learning Environment

## i. Introduction

This document should be read in conjunction with the relevant PSI Accreditation Standards as published on the PSI website at [www.psi.ie](http://www.psi.ie).

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.

The present report concerns the ongoing compliance with the accreditation standards of the five-year fully integrated Master of Pharmacy (MPharm) degree delivered by the School of Pharmacy, University College Cork (UCC) against the relevant PSI Accreditation Standards that were approved by the Council of the PSI on 2 October 2014. Successful completion of the programme leads to the award of the MPharm degree and confirmation by the Higher Education Institution (HEI) that a graduate fully demonstrates the competencies necessary, and holds a qualification appropriate for practice as a pharmacist. UCC graduates hold two degrees; a BPharm awarded following successful completion of Year 4 and an MPharm awarded following successful completion of Year 5.

## ii. Process of Review

An initial paper-based review of the programme against the PSI Standards was conducted in June 2015. On that basis, at its 17 September 2015 meeting, the PSI Council approved the recommendations of the accreditation team that the MPharm programme provided by UCC be recognised and approved for an initial period of two (2) years, with an on-site compliance visit at, or towards, the end of the first year of delivery. Accreditation was subject to three specified conditions being met by 31 December 2015.

An on-site compliance visit to UCC was undertaken in February 2016.

At its 7 July 2016 meeting, the PSI Council approved the recommendations of the accreditation team that the MPharm programme provided by UCC be confirmed for an initial period of two (2) years, with a further focused on-site visit during the second year of delivery.

A focused on-site visit was undertaken in February 2017. On the basis of the accreditation team's recommendations, in June 2017 the PSI Council approved and recognised the programme provided by UCC for a period of three (3) years, commencing 22 June 2017 and expiring 22 June 2020, with a focused onsite compliance visit during the first quarter of 2019.

This is the report of the on-site compliance visit to UCC on 17 January 2019.

## iii. Documentation

The following documents were submitted by the HEI in advance of the compliance visit:

- Letter to PSI, January 2019.
- Fourth Year Joint Modules overview.
- Update UCC Placements 2018/2019.
- Update on APPEL Related Matters.
- MPharm Curriculum Map, College Calendar and Modules for the MPharm year.

- Update on Staff Complement of the School of Pharmacy.
- Correspondence from current Year 4 undergraduate students.

The following documents were made available to the accreditation team by UCC during the compliance visit:

- Consortium agreement between University College Cork, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and University of Dublin, Trinity College
- MPharm Curriculum Map of Modules 2015 – 2020
- Map of MPharm Modules Delivery 2019 – 2020
- MPharm College Calendar 2019 – 2020

#### iv. The Compliance Visit

The accreditation team held a preparatory meeting on 16 January 2019, in advance of the compliance visit.

The compliance visit took place in the School of Pharmacy, UCC on 17 January, 2019.

#### v. The Accreditation Team

The PSI accreditation team comprised;

Name	Designation at the time of visit
Prof. Brenda Costall	Chair, Pharmacy academic with experience of developing and/or accrediting pharmacy degree programmes (international academic)
Mr. Mark Brennan	Pharmacy academic with experience of developing and/or accrediting pharmacy degree programmes
Dr. Jason Last	Healthcare non-pharmacist
Dr. Éilís Ryan	Pharmacist practising in Ireland with experience as a tutor supporting experiential learning
Dr. Nicola Tyers	Quality assurance and regulatory expert
along with;	
Damhnait Gaughan	Head of Registration and Education, PSI
Cora O'Connell	Education Manager, PSI
Siobhan Fitzgerald	Education Standards Officer, PSI
Dr. Matthew Maltby	Rapporteur

There were no declarations of interest.

## vi. Meeting the Standards

### Standard 1: The Professional Degree Programme Provider and Mission

*The Professional Degree Programme Provider must engage in a systematic planning process and have a current strategic plan that facilitates achievement of the Professional Degree Programme Provider's mission, goals and objectives.*

#### Summary of Main Findings and Observations

University College Cork has delivered a four-year BPharm programme since 2003 and the final cohort of students graduated in 2018. In preparation for the implementation of the MPharm integrated programme, UCC developed and trialled a considerable number of modules enabling insights into further paths for development in advance.

The MPharm is the qualification appropriate for practice in Ireland and it is correctly positioned at Level 9 on the NFQ.

Within the framework of the MPharm, UCC School of Pharmacy aims to:

- Educate pharmacists to the highest professional and ethical standards, preparing them for critical patient-focused roles in healthcare provision and in the pharmaceutical industry and encouraging life-long learning.
- Develop excellent, high impact research programmes across the breadth of the discipline of pharmacy, generating new knowledge and highly skilled researchers towards the development of new medicines and procedures that will directly benefit the patient. The MPharm programme is modern and progressive, with integrative principles continuing to remain at the heart of curriculum planning, development and delivery. It appears that conceptualisations of integration continue to underpin the School's way of thinking as it successfully delivers Year 4 of the MPharm and finalises the arrangements for Year 5.

Goals and objectives are clearly articulated and the programme's position at the leading edge of pharmacy education is becoming increasingly apparent. The leadership remains highly motivated and "passionate about our students' learning".

#### Conclusions and Recommendations

The team agreed Standard 1 continues to be met.
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## Standard 2: Leadership, Organisation and Governance

*There must be clear management structures for the Professional Degree Programme with a schedule of roles and responsibilities, and a defined structure and process to show lines of accountability and authority for all those involved in the delivery of the Professional Degree Programme.*

### Summary of Main Findings and Observations

The governance structures within UCC are robust, transparent and clearly articulated in the relevant documentation, which is published on the UCC website.

Following the initiation of the MPharm's development and its later implementation, the staff has ably adapted to some quite fundamental changes within the School with innovative pedagogy. This appetite for innovation is impressive and has provided a solid foundation upon which to build the new programme.

The School continues to engage with the broader university functions, successfully securing additional experiential learning placements within the UCC university teaching hospital structure to supplement placements in other hospitals. The visibility of the programme amongst senior members of the University management team will be further enhanced as the Head of School moves into a new role, which will allow him to share best practice as he leads on innovation within the wider UCC institution.

UCC continues to demonstrate a strong and productive collegial support for APPEL. The APPEL function continues to make impressive progress, consolidating its approaches to accreditation, training and support for all stakeholders in the statutory placements. Lines of responsibility are clearly defined and it maintains a functional identity visibly discrete to that of the School.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The team agreed Standard 2 continues to be met.



### Standard 3: Resources

*The School must have sufficient allocated resources, financial, physical and staff, and have developed and documented contingency plans to cover any deficiencies that may arise in order to ensure the effective delivery of a Professional Degree Programme that continues to meet the 'Accreditation Standards of the five-year fully integrated Master's degree programmes in pharmacy' as approved by the PSI Council from time to time.*

#### Summary of Main Findings and Observations

UCC is a state-funded university and operates within closely monitored financial resources. The University continues to be strongly committed to the development of Pharmacy and the MPharm programme as it moves through its fourth year of roll-out. The purpose-built Cavanagh Building, in which the School is accommodated, is a modern teaching and research environment. The teaching facilities continue to develop, most recently having been remodelled to provide students and teaching staff with technologically more enhanced teaching and learning facilities.

Integrated approaches are becoming increasingly embedded within School teaching and the course content continues to be developed and reviewed within the clear and transparent protocols previously established. Modules are reviewed at regular intervals to ensure that course content remains at the leading edge of research and practice.

The Head of School was pleased to be able to report that the School had been awarded Athena SWAN Bronze Award in acknowledgment of its demonstrated commitment to promote the advancement of STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine) careers for women in higher education.

The School staff maintains its long-term commitment to successfully delivering the MPharm. That the programme is now rolling out with such success, appears to have reinforced and consolidated that resolve to deliver a highly regarded programme internationally. This motivation is also mirrored in the functions of APPEL, within which UCC currently maintains two UCC-based PE roles to sustain the ongoing evolution of the experiential learning placements.

#### Conclusions and Recommendations

The team agreed Standard 3 continues to be met.
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## Standard 4: Curriculum

*The curriculum must be planned to deliver an integrated learning experience that combines and co-ordinates all components in a logical and cohesive manner with clearly articulated linkages between and across units within years and between years. The Professional Degree Programme must be planned as a whole to deliver graduates who have the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours to meet the Core Competency Framework for Pharmacists necessary for entry to the profession of pharmacy and to assure the accountability of the profession to society.*

### Summary of Main Findings and Observations

The UCC programme sets out to train practitioners who are committed to continuous development throughout their professional journey by instilling reflective learning practices from an early stage. The curriculum is designed to achieve its outcomes through a learning experience that is increasingly integrated horizontally and vertically. The taught components of the programme are interspersed with a range of experiential placements which allow students to apply knowledge, skills and behaviours explored in the academic setting to the practice context.

The practice contextualisation of knowledge, skills and behaviours is reinforced through specifically CCF-focussed course content and assessments.

UCC's programme emphasises reflective practice from the outset and this will shape the students to become practitioners for whom self-reflection and continuous development is second-nature. This approach to instilling reflective practice in students from an early stage was noted previously by the accreditation team as a particular strength of the programme and it will be further reinforced with the Reflective Practice module planned for the Year 5 curriculum.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The team agreed Standard 4 continues to be met.
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## Standard 5: Teaching and Learning Strategy

*The Teaching and Learning Strategy must be designed to deliver a curriculum that produces graduates that meet the Core Competency Framework for Pharmacists as established by the PSI Council from time to time.*

### Summary of Main Findings and Observations

The approach outlined in the Teaching and Learning strategy document aims to educate and train pharmacists with an in-depth knowledge of the science, the skills and competencies underpinning the professional practice of pharmacy.

The accreditation team remains assured that teaching and learning maintains an appropriate focus on the pharmacy context, particularly the requirements of the CCF, and it accounts for emerging roles of the pharmacist in terms of interprofessional working models and interdisciplinarity. It appears that the course content is reviewed regularly to ensure its currency and relevance to pharmacy students.

Professionalism and the development of the necessary skills for appropriate, effective and safe pharmacy practice are core elements throughout the programme; professional development modules span the full duration of the programme and experiential learning placements of varying durations throughout the programme support the development of pharmacy practice.

UCC has embraced a not inconsiderable challenge to develop and deliver a curriculum of a fully integrated nature and the accreditation team is confident that UCC will continue to refine and enhance a demonstrably progressive teaching and learning strategy as the programme moves towards delivering its first full cycle during the 2019/2020 academic year.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The team agreed Standard 5 continues to be met.
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## Standard 6: Assessment Strategy

*The Assessment Strategy must ensure that all graduates demonstrate the competencies set out in the Core Competency Framework for Pharmacists as established by the PSI Council from time to time. The strategy must align with the teaching and learning strategy (see Standard 5) and use effective and validated diagnostic, formative and summative assessment methods that are reviewed at frequent intervals and take account of developments in pharmacy practice within all components of the Professional Degree Programme.*

### Summary of Main Findings and Observations

During the 2017 accreditation visit, the accreditation examined the UCC assessment strategy and concluded that the UCC assessment regime is consistent with the integrated principles of the curriculum and that the link to the Teaching and Learning Strategy is clear. The assessment strategy provides a robust framework for learning outcomes to be consistently, fairly and stringently assessed according to predetermined benchmarks. Patient-safety underpins the assessment strategy and remains at the heart of its mechanisms. During any given assessment, any student demonstrating unsafe practice and behaviours that pose a risk to patient and public safety will be failed.

Mechanisms by which assessments are collated and reviewed are clear and transparent; the School has also recently developed and trialled examination rubrics to provide both students and assessors with a consistent and delineated guide to assessment responses.

The School Appeals process is robust and consistent with UCC's published protocols.

The School maintains a protocol for the appointment and training of external examiners, which is in-line with that of UCC as an institution. For the purposes of monitoring the assessment of the modules co-delivered during the Year 4 experiential placements, UCC, along with the consortium partners have jointly appointed an external examiner.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The team agreed Standard 6 continues to be met.
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## Standard 7: Quality Assurance and Enhancement

*All processes and activities related to the Professional Degree Programme must be clearly defined, documented, executed and controlled in accordance with a system of Quality Management which assures and demonstrates consistency, reproducibility and transparency of operations. There must be evidence that this process is being used to enhance the quality of the provision.*

### Summary of Main Findings and Observations

The quality assurance mechanisms in place within the School and University are robust and continue to demonstrably support the ongoing evolution of the MPharm degree as a high-quality, leading-edge programme.

In maintaining and assuring the quality of its programme, the School is supported by APPEL; APPEL maintains quality assurance accountability for the experiential learning placements in Years 2, 4 and 5. The quality assurance mechanisms currently implemented by APPEL continue to evolve.

APPEL continues to make significant progress; Year 4 placements have been successfully undertaken and preparations for the roll-out of Year 5 placements are advanced. The APPEL operation is supported by the effective deployment of IT functionalities which support an innovative VLE, as well as efficient administrative operations.

Professional development among staff is promoted by the School and currently 80% of School staff hold a postgraduate qualification in Teaching and Learning.

The School staff is highly motivated and continues to show strong commitment to delivering a programme of the highest quality, and establishing suitable systems to monitor and sustain it.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The team agreed Standard 7 continues to be met.
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## Standard 8: Students

*There must be processes at HEI and School level to assist prospective students in their application to the Professional Degree Programme, in securing and maintaining placements for the practice-placement elements of the Professional Degree Programme, and to support students' development as learners and as future practising professionals.*

### Summary of Main Findings and Observations

Relevant policies and procedures are published on the UCC website and are therefore easily available to all.

The APPEL function continues to make impressive progressive and appears to be on-track to deliver experiential training during Years 2, 4 and 5 which are well-planned and appropriate.

The environment within the School is oriented towards student support, and a high level of care is afforded to student welfare throughout UCC as an institution. The University takes its duty of care very seriously and it is committed to ensuring all students have the opportunities to engage in suitable activities, both curricular and extra-curricular.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The team agreed Standard 8 continues to be met.
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## vii. General Observations

The accreditation team was pleased with the delivery of the programme. The team was impressed with reflective components to the programme, the obvious commitment of all the staff, and the concern for student welfare.

In the student session, it was clear that students feel supported and happy with the quality of the programme, and are clearly developing as future professionals who feel part of a strong community within the school.

The team continues to be interested in the development of integration within the programme, and will watch with interest the scope for further hard-wiring and embedding of integrated approaches across modules holistically.

Overall, the team feels that the standards continue to be met.

## viii. Conclusions and Recommendations

The accreditation team agreed the following in relation to the Five-Year Integrated Master's Degree Programme provided by University College Cork (UCC):

- Standard 1 is met.
- Standard 2 is met.
- Standard 3 is met.
- Standard 4 is met.
- Standard 5 is met.
- Standard 6 is met.
- Standard 7 is met.
- Standard 8 is met.

On that basis, the accreditation team makes the following recommendations to the Council of the PSI;

An on-site visit be carried out towards the end of the current accreditation period (course accredited until June 2020), which will reflect on whether the delivery of the entirety of the programme continues to conform with requirements that the programme of education and training and all matters relating to its delivery and processes of assessment, including staffing, premises, facilities, in-service practical training, funding and procedures, conform with the accreditation criteria for recognition and approval of the programme of education.

The Provider should note that the Council of the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland regards the report in its entirety as the view of the PSI on the provision, and that the Provider should take all the comments of the team into account in any development of the provision in response to this report.