



RCSI

Health Professions Education Research Strategy

RCSI DEVELOPING HEALTHCARE LEADERS WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE WORLDWIDE



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Health Professions Education Research

The mission of Health Professions Education (HPE) at RCSI is to train educators from all health professions to promote excellence in teaching, translate theory and novel strategies to the learning environment, and promote research that is informed by education needs in different health settings (e.g., clinical and academic, national and international, inter-professional), expand knowledge in the field, and develop new methodologies and approaches that can be translated into more advanced health professions education practices.

While RCSI has had some ongoing activity in this area, the establishment of a Health Professions Education Centre (HPEC) in 2013 reflects RCSI's ambition to substantially grow this area of research. The HPE research strategy will build on organisational capability, with HPEC supporting RCSI educators in their research, and also enhance partnerships, e.g., with RCSI international sites such as RCSI Bahrain, Penang Medical College and Perdana University; with national partners such as 3U (RCSI with NUI Maynooth and Dublin City University) and with HPEC existing international links, e.g., Maastricht University (Netherlands), The Mayo Clinic (US) and McGill University (Canada).

Two areas where RCSI is ideally placed to make a unique contribution to health professions education research are multiculturalism and inter-professional education. The HPE research strategy will benefit from RCSI's intrinsic multicultural environment both within and across campuses, to develop evidence-based research programmes in health professions education in an increasingly international educational environment relevant to health professions. As a completely health sciences-focused, single faculty organisation, the opportunity for inter-professional education is optimised at undergraduate, postgraduate and continuing professional development education levels. The HPEC will use these opportunities to inform international best educational practice through research. Visiting academics (e.g., through the Educator in Residence Programme, the Fulbright Scholar programme and Erasmus visitors to HPEC), targeted education meetings and emphasis on early scholarly publications in identified research themes will build the College's reputation in this area.

Addressing the challenges of HPE research at RCSI

To introduce a quality HPE research programme at RCSI, a number of gaps will be filled:

- Analytical and methodological gaps – HPEC and other College staff will provide the necessary research tools and standards (e.g. statistical input from the proposal stage to analysis, access to qualitative data analysis software, e.g., N-Vivo.) and development opportunities accessed via HPEC. These will include:
 - Diploma in Health Professions Education (to support excellence in educational practice): a National University of Ireland (NUI)/ RCSI-accredited Diploma in Health Professions Education launched in Autumn 2014, aiming to support the educational and developmental needs of faculty involved in teaching undergraduate health professional students. As successful research in health professions education springs from educational activity, it is expected that participation will assist in the reflective development of relevant research questions embedded in practice, and HPEC will endeavor to provide ongoing support for the development of diplomate's promising research in the identified strategic themes.
 - Educator's Research Toolkit (to support the development of appropriate research skills focused on health professions education), to be launched in late 2016, will aim to support the health professions education research needs of faculty involved in teaching health professions students.



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- **Knowledge gap** – Recognising the challenge for busy educators to address their knowledge gap in the field of HPE, HPEC staff will build groups of those individuals under RCSI's strategic educational research themes and support them in research.
- **Capacity gap** – To maximise the impact of our research efforts, HPEC will promote the establishment of collaborative and interdisciplinary research projects with national and international partners. The HPEC was invited to join the Best Evidence Medical Education (BEME) Collaboration as one of 12 BEME International Collaborating Centres (BICC) in 2014. Participation at this level will increase RCSI's profile, research output and connectivity. The Best Evidence Medical Education (BEME) Collaboration (Harden et al., 1999) is an international group of individuals, universities and professional organisations committed to the development of evidence-informed education in the medical and health professions through:
 - the dissemination of information which allows teachers and stakeholders in the medical and health professions to make decisions on the basis of the best evidence available;
 - the production of systematic reviews which present the best available evidence and meet the needs of the user; and,
 - the creation of a culture of best evidence education amongst individuals, institutions and national bodies.

BEME's goal is to provide, and to make available, the latest findings from scientifically-grounded educational research. This is to enable teachers and administrators to make informed decisions about the kinds of evidence-based education initiatives that boost learner performance on cognitive and clinical measures. As a BEME International Collaborating Centre, RCSI will undertake reviews and promote the development of new methodologies and HPEC will encourage faculty to join with them in this activity.

Research themes

RCSI research in health professions education will be informed by its core teaching activities. This efficient and effective way of building educational research maintains focus and enriches educational programmes. The focus will also be on studies that are applicable to an international setting and have a strong conceptual framework. RCSI research in HPE will therefore focus on the following themes:

Integrated consultation skills:

This is a major HPEC development stream and it includes the professional consultation, doctor-patient and interprofessional communication, all forms of communication (verbal, non-verbal, written, social media etc.), simulation in all its forms (mannequins, simulated patients and hybrid simulation), together with clinical reasoning.

Professionalism:

The teaching of professionalism is being formalized as a vertical theme in RCSI's curriculum. This includes developing a shared institutional definition of professionalism (as action research with international partners, HPEC holds an Irish Research Council grant for the development of a definition at RCSI with 3U partners in linguistics and anthropology), enacting a targeted educational intervention, and assessing its outcome for students and faculty with a mixed methods approach. Professionalism is key for faculty at large and HPEC welcomes engagement as its translation across disciplines and international RCSI sites will form the basis for ongoing evaluation

Technology Enhanced Learning (TeL):

RCSI is making significant investments in personnel and technologies for education. RCSI's TeL Strategy (Autumn 2014, HPEC website) provides the basis for evaluation of prioritised initiatives. This will include the introduction of smart technologies into clinical settings, novel methods for delivering education, and gaming solutions to educating in regard to complex clinical reasoning. These projects will work to meet



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the specific educational challenges and needs of Faculty across specialties and courses, while optimising the opportunity to evaluate the educational impact on programme developments.

The Pedagogy of Learning:

This is a cross-cutting theme. Currently, HPEC focuses on educational development, e.g., peer observation of teaching and science-based education activity (N-STEP project). As the educational strategy develops, and as the operational Teaching and Learning Committee approves new initiatives, there will be further opportunities for research.

Transitions in education:

Building on RCSI research on students' first year transition journey (school to university), and on their experiences of internship and fitness to practice (medical school to clinical practice), there is scope to further explore student experiences of transition (school to college, pre-clinical to clinical, in Ireland and at international sites).

Any of the above themes in educational research should be investigated in the unique environment of the RCSI family leveraging opportunities between sites and countries to produce informative research addressing issues pertinent to global education:

Inter-professional education (IPE) and transnational education:

RCSI recognises the need to leverage more in terms of IPE and transnational research. Potential areas of interest are communication skills and professionalism as well as the pedagogy of learning (e.g., transitions in education) which can differ substantially in terms of perspective between professions.

Culture and health professions education:

RCSI's international student population in Dublin (>60 nationalities represented) and its international schools in Bahrain and Malaysia provide unparalleled opportunities to address cultural aspects across topics such as student experiences, educational approaches and curriculum fit for multiple and international sites. A series of projects will be highlighted at a range of events, including the annual International Education Forum and the monthly Medical Education Research Group (MERG) video-linked meetings, to optimise cross-site cooperation within RCSI.

To discuss further research and development in any of the above designated RCSI health professions education research themes please contact Prof Pawlikowska at HPEC to discuss ideas and to access support for the development of health professions education research.

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