SITE VISIT REPORT FOR THE

INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION

REVIEW OF THE

School of Public Health
University College Cork

Site Visit Report
Executive Summary

06.12.2022

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Executive Summary

Foreword

The Review Team (hereafter named "the Team") would like to thank everyone involved with this process of institutional accreditation and for the hard work that went into preparing the validation and Self-Evaluation stages. The Team would also like to extend their gratitude to the School and University for their generous hospitality and candour during the accreditation site visit.

Criterion I: Governance and Organisation of the Institution

The School of Public Health (hereafter termed "the School") sits within the University College of Cork (UCC) and is fully recognised within the Irish education framework. Its position in the UCC, is both well positioned and well supported and is highly respected nationally.

The School has a highly respected local and national reputation with connected leadership. This connectivity, along with its size, allows the School an amount of flexibility and capacity to adapt quickly. This was apparent in how well the School adapted to the challenges posed by COVID19 where student learning, research and welfare were accommodated swiftly and to a high standard.

As the School moves forward it is recommended to maintain many of the positives that come from its position and the constructive ethos that surrounds the School especially with regard to student - faculty relations as well as the momentum gained through experiences of the pandemic. The School should also strive to maintain its ongoing influence and impact whilst embracing wider inclusivity in its structural development.

Criterion II: Aims and Objectives of the Public Health Institution and its Programmes

The School in Cork is the only stand-alone school of public health in Ireland. It began in 1997 as the Department of Epidemiology and Public Health and twenty years later became a school of public health within the College of Medicine and Health.

The mission of the School is "to improve the health of the population through the discovery, dissemination and translation of knowledge." The School hosts a range of educational offerings including, Certificates, Diplomas, Bachelors, Masters and PhD which are delivered in online, on-site and blended approaches. Research is both extensive and forms a cornerstone of the School's long-term strategy. The School maintains the highest citation for researchers in Ireland, is the first school of public health to adopt online learning and the first to establish an undergraduate degree.

The School is well integrated across the University and with the external public health community, which is highly commendable, and the School is should continue to promote its work across the

University as a driving force for public health, operating as an effective hub or connector within the University and with the external public health community.

Criterion III: Programmes

The School delivers a strong portfolio of interdisciplinary programmes that are supported by a strong research-active teaching faculty with impressive CVs. Programmes are delivered by international faculty and the undergraduate and graduate programmes include an array of electives which are available for students throughout the university.

The School hosts a solid list of international collaborations as well as mobility opportunities for students. The University's internationalisation strategy has been for many years, to increase international students. COVID proved a challenging time to this strategy. At present the University has adopted a broader definition of internationalisation in the University, which includes internationalisation of curricula and faculty. At present there are 104 countries represented on campus with around 400 domestic students overseas.

Criterion IV: Students and Graduates

The School has clearly defined and inclusive admission processes that actively support equality, diversity and inclusivity principles. Students expressed their positive experiences of the programmes and how the faculty was flexible and responsive to students' learning, research and pastoral needs.

Counselling services are available within the University and include training for staff. In 2015 the UCC was the first recognised Health Promoting University in Ireland by the Health Service Executive (HSE South). The University therefore has a robust strategy aimed at supporting the health and wellbeing of staff, students and the wider community.

The School utilises various communications for students which provide detailed information ranging from open days, outreach activities through to LinkedIn, Facebook, WhatsApp groups and email. The website contains full details of the programmes on offer and this is complemented through an orientation week and materials provided in the online learning environment.

Criterion V: Human Resources and Staffing

The School Faculty possesses a range of interdisciplinary skills which is reflected in the curricula offered at the School and practitioners are invited as external lecturers. Faculty are heavily involved in research and the School has in excess of 60 research projects ongoing. The School and UCC are ranked the highest for Public Health research in Ireland.

Faculty of the School are highly embedded in outreach activities ranging from international WHO projects through to local public health initiatives. Moving forward, the School should seek to maintain

the long term sustainability of its faculty and review internal workload, progression and promotion opportunities and management processes.

The School is also well supported through robust administrative support that is highly appreciated by students and faculty.

Criterion VI: Supportive Services, Budgeting and Facilities

The School of public health sits in a modern, built-for-purpose, building and has access to wide-ranging facilities on campus including large Students Union facilities. Library and learning resources were found to be of a high standard and IT services were praised for their high quality provision and their agility in pivoting to online during and since the pandemic.

The Team found excellent support across a range of professional services including, admissions, access, special needs, student support and health services. All the services available at the UCC were praised during the site meetings for their responsiveness and enthusiasm for blended and online delivery.

Criterion VII: Internal Quality Management

The Team found that the School has well-developed quality systems for the review, development and enhancement of programmes and modules. An external examiner process is in place and a periodic quality review process is undertaken every seven years in line with national requirements. Programmatic reviews are scheduled to begin in February 2024.

As part of the university there is also a research quality review which the School undertakes along with other schools in the UCC. This provides an opportunity to check and access the quality of what has been achieved and how it aligns with the overall university mission and strategy.

Student feedback is gathered and reviewed for programmatic change and the School is continuing to improve and develop student feedback mechanisms finding innovative ways to measure student experience.

Summary of Conclusions

Criterion I: Governance and Organisation of the Institution	
Sub – Criterion 1.1	Met
Sub – Criterion 1.2	Met
Sub – Criterion 1.3	Met with comments
Sub – Criterion 1.4	Met with comments
Criterion II: Aims and Objectives of the Public Health Institution and its Programmes	
Sub – Criterion 2.1	Met
Sub – Criterion 2.2	Met
Sub – Criterion 2.3	Met
Sub – Criterion 2.4	Met
Criterion III: Programmes	
Sub – Criterion 3.1	Met
Sub – Criterion 3.2	Met
Sub – Criterion 3.3	Met
Sub – Criterion 3.4	Met
Sub – Criterion 3.5	Met
Sub – Criterion 3.6	Met
Sub – Criterion 3.7	Met
Criterion IV: Students and Graduates	
Sub – Criterion 4.1	Met
Sub – Criterion 4.2	Met
Sub – Criterion 4.3	Met
Sub – Criterion 4.4	Met
Sub – Criterion 4.5	Partially Met with comments
Sub – Criterion 4.6	Met
Criterion V: Human Resources and Staffing	
Sub – Criterion 5.1	Met
Sub – Criterion 5.2	Met
Sub – Criterion 5.3	Met
Sub – Criterion 5.4	Met
Sub – Criterion 5.5	Met
Sub – Criterion 5.6	Partially Met with comments
Sub – Criterion 5.7	Met with comments
Sub – Criterion 5.8	Met
Criterion VI: Supportive Services, Budgeting and Facilities	
Sub – Criterion 6.1	Met
Sub – Criterion 6.2	Met
Sub – Criterion 6.3	Met
Sub – Criterion 6.4	Met
Sub – Criterion 6.5	Met
Criterion VII: Internal Quality Management	
Sub – Criterion 7.1	Met
Sub – Criterion 7.2	Met with comments
Sub – Criterion 7.3	Met with comments
Sub – Criterion 7.4	Met