



هيئة ضمان جودة التعليم و التدريب  
Quality Assurance Authority for Education & Training

# Higher Education Review Unit

## Institutional Follow- Up Review Report

Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland – Medical  
University of Bahrain  
Kingdom of Bahrain

Date: 31 May 2011

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## 1. Overview of the Institutional Follow-up Process

The institutional follow-up site visit by the Higher Education Review Unit (HERU) is part of a cycle of continuing quality assurance, review, reporting and improvement by the Quality Assurance Authority for Education and Training (QAAET) in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

At least one year after publication of its Institutional Review Report the institution submits to HERU a report which clearly shows how the institution has maintained and/or enhanced the commendations of the review report and specifies how the institution has met its affirmations and recommendations. The institution substantiates its claims with supporting documents, in the form of Appendixes. Details of how the institution is monitoring and evaluating the improvement activities should also be provided.

This follow-up review process applies to all higher education institutions that have had institutional reviews undertaken by HERU.

The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland-Medical University of Bahrain (RCSI-MUB) submitted an Improvement Plan to HERU in the required time set out in the Handbook for Institutional Reviews. In this Plan actions were identified to address the 23 Recommendations contained in the Institutional Review Report. In February 2011 RCSI-MUB submitted its One Year Report, which contained a narrative and documentary evidence about the progress the institution has made thus far in implementing quality improvements.

The Panel responsible for the Follow-up comprised the Executive Director of HERU and two Senior Directors, one of whom was the Director responsible for co-ordinating this site visit. The evidence base included: the updated Improvement Plan, the relevant appendices of the updated Improvement Plan, the Institutional Review Report, and relevant supplementary materials submitted on 20 May 2011. Interviews were also held during the site visit with a range of senior managers, academics, administrative staff, students, employers and alumni. These interviews allow the Panel to triangulate the evidence.

The Follow-up visit took place on 31 May 2011, the purpose of which is (i) to assess the progress made in quality enhancement and improvement of RCSI-MUB since the institutional review in May 2009, for which the review report was published in March 2010; and (ii) develop a report which outlines the progress made about the extent to which the Recommendations have been addressed.

This Institutional Follow-up Review Report sets out the findings with regard to the Recommendations contained in the published Review Report. For ease of reading the Recommendations made in the 2009 published Review Report are clustered together (in italics) at the beginning of each section where a new theme is considered. The text that follows reflects the findings of the Panel during its visit in May 2011.

## **2. Brief Overview of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland – Medical University of Bahrain**

The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland-Medical University of Bahrain (RCSI-MUB) was founded under license from the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain and was officially opened in October 2004. It is registered as a Single Person Company (SPC) and is wholly owned by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland operating in Dublin (hereinafter referred to as 'RCSI-Dublin' or 'the Parent University'). RCSI-Dublin also has academic activities in other countries in the region and a medical campus in Malaysia.

RCSI-MUB began its academic activities by establishing a School of Medicine where students from nine countries were admitted to a foundation year in Medicine in 2004. The School of Nursing & Midwifery was established later and enrolled its first students in September 2006. RCSI-MUB also offers a Master's degree in Healthcare Ethics & Law. The University graduate its first cohort of students in all these programmes in 2010. In 2011 RCSI-MUB has 930 students and 129 academic staff members. It offers four programmes across three schools.

## **3. Findings of the Follow-up Review**

In the following sub-sections, the progress made in addressing the Recommendations under each theme is considered. The Recommendations from the Institutional Review Report are clustered together in italics.

### **3.1. Mission, Planning and Governance**

*3.1.1. HERU recommends that, in its periodical reviews of its Vision and Mission statements, the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland-Medical University of Bahrain develop and implement a process that includes inputs from internal and external stakeholders.*

*3.1.2. HERU recommends that the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland-Medical University of Bahrain develop and implement a strategic plan that would provide direction for the University to achieve its Mission and Vision, supported by detailed operational plans of different areas of institutional functioning; ensure that these plans are supported by Key Performance Indicators and a broad resource allocation policy that will enable the University to achieve its stated strategic goals.*

*3.1.3. HERU recommends that the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland-Medical University of Bahrain develop and implement a process to activate its Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism Policy, that it regularly monitor its implementation and effectiveness, and keep a detailed record of its execution.*

- 3.1.4. *HERU recommends that the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland-Medical University of Bahrain finalise, approve and implement all its draft policies.*
- 3.1.5. *HERU recommends that the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland-Medical University of Bahrain urgently develop and fully implement a detailed Health and Safety Policy, Plan and the procedures associated with it.*
- 3.1.6. *HERU recommends that the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland-Medical University of Bahrain define its key relationships in a structured and detailed format with appropriate terms of reference, membership and reporting lines for all the committees.*
- 3.1.7. *HERU recommends that the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland-Medical University of Bahrain develop and implement an effective strategy, plan and structure for internal and external communication.*

RCSI-MUB is wholly owned by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and follows its planning and review cycles. The Panel saw evidence and received confirmation in interviews with senior management that there is an implemented formal review process for its vision and mission statements that includes consultations with internal and external stakeholders. With regards to strategic planning this has yet to be initiated but will be done so after the parent institution has finalised its new strategic plan. Senior members of RCSI-MUB are involved in this planning process.

The Panel heard of plans to establish a wider policy that defines plagiarism, including the use of online texts and paper mills and the procedure to detect and deal with it. This will be done in collaboration with RCSI Dublin. The same policy will apply to the two campuses.

A comprehensive suite of policies has been finalised and approved; many of which are now in the implementation phase. The Health and Safety plan, policy and procedure has now been developed, approved and implemented.

A task force has been established to review all committees of the University including their functions, remits and membership.

RCSI-MUB has established a communication department, which has a staff complement of three people. It has been structured so that it can address the internal and external communication needs of the University. There is also a programme of activities that is being implemented to ensure effective communication. The Panel heard during interviews with a range of staff that video conferencing is now used and that this has enhanced the relationship between RCSI-MUB and RCSI-Dublin.

## 3.2 Academic Standards

3.2.1 *HERU recommends that the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland-Medical University of Bahrain track students' performance against their entry level scores and use the results as an indicator for reviewing its admission policy.*

3.2.2 *HERU recommends that the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland-Medical University of Bahrain clearly define in a policy document the relationship between the University and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, Dublin.*

The University has started to track the students' performance based on entry scores in academic achievement and English language proficiency. An analysis was undertaken to relate foundation year results to entry criteria to qualify for admission. During interviews with management, the Panel heard that the University plans to extend this analysis to include the five year direct entry cohort.

The University drafted a document to set out the relationship between the Dublin and Bahrain campuses. The document was approved in June 2010.

## 3.3 Quality Assurance and Enhancement

3.3.1 *HERU recommends that the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland-Medical University of Bahrain review the status and the line of reporting of its Quality Assurance Group and revise the Group's remit, to cover all aspects of the quality assurance functions.*

3.3.2 *HERU recommends that the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland-Medical University of Bahrain develop a university-wide quality assurance framework, and after which develop and implement a quality plan.*

3.3.3 *HERU recommends that the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland-Medical University of Bahrain develop and implement a process to systematically collect data on its core functions, analyse them and use the results for informed decision-making.*

There is now a Quality Assurance Committee to oversee the development and implementation of the University's quality framework, policies, and quality processes, including coordinating the University's preparations for external quality audits. Work is in the early stages of development.

The Panel heard of plans to establish a Quality Enhancement office that will have a direct reporting line to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

RCSI-MUB has started to develop a system to generate data to inform decision-making. One of these systems is Quercus, which is now operational and able to provide data for student demographics, admission status, and registration.

### 3.4 Quality of Teaching and Learning

- 3.4.1 *HERU recommends that the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland-Medical University of Bahrain strengthen its staff development practices and ensure that expertise in teaching and learning is linked to appointments and promotion procedures.*
- 3.4.2 *HERU recommends that the Royal College of Surgeons-Medical University of Bahrain further develop the capacity of the University's staff members to design curricula at module and course level which explore the full functionality of the Virtual Learning Environment available at the University and which fully integrate online learning with lectures and case-based sessions.*
- 3.4.3 *HERU recommends that the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland-Medical University of Bahrain work with some urgency to identify suitable individuals who can provide academic leadership and clinical mentoring and who are able to work in Bahrain on a more permanent basis than most current appointees to the posts.*

The University has established a "Medical Education Taskforce" to promote its staff development practices. The Panel learned that the taskforce has undertaken a survey to determine the staff development learning needs. The analysis of this survey led to the development of a list of training programmes covering the various topics suggested by the staff; the Panel was provided with a copy of these topics. During interviews, however, the Panel was informed that, although the training programme was formulated a year ago, none of the suggested workshops has yet been conducted. The Panel encourages the University to give more priority to the area of staff development and commence the Taskforce's training programmes. The Panel was pleased to learn that the promotion and appointment procedures encompasses teaching and learning expertise among the criteria.

The University's "Medical Education Taskforce" is also responsible for examining the use of Virtual Learning Platform (VLE) by staff members. The Taskforce has identified On-line learning as a main area for staff development to enable academics to create on-line learning material. During interviews, the Panel learned that when new staff members join the University, they are provided with training on the basic design of on-line courses. Staff members, however, expressed their desire to have more formal training on the design of on-line material and the use of the Virtual Learning Platform. The Panel was informed by ICT staff that they face several challenges in the use of the VLE, such as the rapidly changing technology and the inability to use the VLE as the main communication tool, as most students still use popular social media for their communication. The Panel was pleased to learn that the School of Nursing has made significant progress in integrating VLE components and tools as part of their modules. The Panel encourages the University to share this good practice across other departments.

The University has made plans to provide academic leadership and clinical mentoring on a more permanent basis. In interviews with Senior Management, the Panel learned that these plans for the recruitment of full-time clinical staff will move forward once the King Hamad General Hospital (KHGH) is operational. The original plans were for KHGH to be functional in September 2011; as this date has been delayed, the University continues to hire clinical professors from Ireland on a 2-3 years contract.

### **3.5 Students Support**

3.5.1 *HERU recommends that the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland-Medical University of Bahrain strengthen all its student support services in order to meet the needs of the increasing number of students.*

3.5.2 *HERU recommends that the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland-Medical University of Bahrain provide students with assistance for off-campus accommodation while the University works towards building on-campus residences.*

3.5.3 *HERU recommends that the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland-Medical University of Bahrain engage in a dialogue with all its students in order to develop a mechanism through which the Constitution of the Student Council could be reviewed so that it safeguards the rights of students in all programmes to be represented in the Student Council.*

Two new areas of student support services have been established: the Student Welfare Office and the Student Recreation Centre. Five additional staff members have been appointed to provide the services.

The University provided assistance for students to obtain off-campus accommodation. The student service unit holds a database for students wishing to share accommodation, and provides assistance with possible matching for students. During an interview with students, the Panel heard of appreciation of these services.

A review of the Student Council Constitution has been made by the current students and changes have been made to ensure fair representation of all students in the Council. These changes were presented to, and approved by, the Management Committee.

The Panel learned from students that there is now an allocated budget for the Student Council and of satisfaction with the financial support they currently receive from the University to conduct all the non-curricular campus activities. The Panel acknowledges the support the Council receives from the University as this enhances the student learning experience.

## **3.6 Human Resources**

3.6.1 *HERU recommends that the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland-Medical University of Bahrain undertake a systematic investigation across all the professions represented in the University to assess the problems surrounding the professional registration of the staff on secondment to the University, in order to safeguard the University and ensure that accurate information is provided to potential staff during the recruitment process.*

It is now a requirement of RCSI-MUB that all clinical staff be professionally registered in Bahrain.

## **3.7 Infrastructure, Physical and Other Resources**

No recommendation

## **3.8 Research**

3.8.1 *HERU recommends that the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland-Medical University of Bahrain review the processes used to review and approve research proposals submitted by both students and faculty members and that the University's Research and Ethics Committee commit to building the capacity of its students and staff members to make decisions in relation to ethical issues and codes of conduct in human and animal research.*

3.8.2 *HERU recommends that the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland-Medical University of Bahrain develop and implement an overarching research strategy and provide the capacity and resources needed to attain the goals identified in it.*

In interviews with senior management, academics and students, the Panel learned that currently research is in its early stages, as the University faces several challenges preventing the establishment of a research culture. The main challenges include: inadequate budget, limiting infrastructure, the size of the University and the absence of a National Research Strategy in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Nevertheless, the University has made significant progress in recent years towards enhancing research despite the above-mentioned challenges. The University has formulated ambitious plans to make research and postgraduate training an integral component of its future strategies. A School of Postgraduate Studies and Research was established in 2009, and a research strategy was drafted to serve as the School's mission.

The University has also reviewed the membership of the Research Ethics Committee and the remit of the Research Committee. Moreover, detailed procedures and application forms for research grants were developed in the academic year 2010/2011. The Panel also learned that research ethics is integrated at all levels of teaching as part of the curriculum, and that a research ethics policy has been drafted. The Panel encourages

the University to move forward with its research plans and to concentrate its efforts on health issues that are of direct relevance to the Kingdom of Bahrain.

### **3.9 Community Engagement**

*3.9.1 HERU recommends that the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland-Medical University of Bahrain develop and implement a community engagement policy that includes a mechanism for monitoring, recording and evaluating its community involvement.*

*3.9.2 HERU recommends that the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland-Medical University of Bahrain develop a plan in which the University conceptualises its arrangements for supporting the wider health services and community development initiatives in Bahrain and the region as outlined in its Noble Purpose.*

The University has taken some initial steps towards enhancing its community engagement services. A “Community Activities Committee” was formed, comprising staff and students representatives, and is responsible for interacting with internal and external stakeholders in order to coordinate the contribution of the University to the local community. The University, however, does not yet have a clear policy that enables the monitoring, recording and evaluation of its community involvement. During interviews, the Panel learned that the University is planning to put in place a community engagement policy that governs engagement strategies with external organizations, prioritizes community engagement activities and monitors their progress.

The Panel was provided with a comprehensive list of community engagement activities that are aimed at supporting the wider health services and community development in the Kingdom of Bahrain. However, the implementation of these activities still requires a more structured approach and planning. The Panel encourages the University to progress its work on the development of a community engagement policy which will enable it to maximize the benefits of its contribution to the community.