



# Internal Review Examinations Office

## Peer Review Group Report

# DOCUMENT CONTROL SHEET

Name of Unit	Examinations Office					
Project Title	Quality Review					
Document Title	Examinations Office, Peer Review Group Report (Final)					
Document No.						
This Document Comprises	DCS	TOC	Text	List of Tables	List of Figures	No. of Appendices

Status	Author(s)	Reviewed By	Approved By	Issue Date
Draft 1 (19/7/11)	Ms Rachael Bevilacqua	RB 27/7/11 RB 12/8/11 RB 16/8/11 RB 8/1/12		12/1/12
	Ms Michelle Berigan	MB 10/8/11	MB 18/12/11, 11/1/12	
	Dr Pauline Joyce	PJ 26/7/11 PJ 16/8/11	PJ 19/12/11, 9/1/12	
	Mr Kieran Tangney	KT 18/8/11	KT, 19/12/11, 11/1/12	

# 1 INTRODUCTION AND UNIT DETAILS

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This report provides a summary of the findings of the Peer Review Group following review of the Examinations Office Self-Assessment Report and a site visit on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> July 2011. During the site-visit the Peer Review Group met with 68 stakeholders and were given access to numerous supporting documents. This was the first review of the Examinations Office since the RCSI received independent degree-awarding powers by order of the Minister of Education & Skills of the Republic of Ireland in October 2010.

The purpose of the report is to highlight areas of good practice as identified by the review and to assist the unit in developing and enhancing its assessment provision.

## 1.2 OVERVIEW OF THE UNIT

The Examinations Office supports the central administration of the undergraduate, postgraduate, fellowship, intercollegiate and RCSI admissions examinations which include:

- Undergraduate Examinations for the Medical School, Graduate Entry Programme, Pharmacy and Physiotherapy
- Postgraduate Examinations for Membership and Diploma Examinations at home and overseas
- Examinations Health Professions Admission Test (HPAT), Graduate Australian Medical School Admission Test (GAMSAT),

The Examinations Office identified their four main stakeholders as being students, postgraduate candidates, academics and clinical examiners. Assessment methods utilised by the RCSI included written papers (essay, short notes, MCQ's), oral examinations (vivas), practical and clinical examinations (OSCE and long-cases).

The Examinations Office is responsible for organising examinations, collating and publishing results for 130 modules and 130 repeat modules for the undergraduate degree programmes. Postgraduate assessment takes places across ten locations worldwide. In addition, the office is responsible for the issuing of transcripts, verification of graduate qualifications, liaison with embassies and student sponsors, the compilation of statistics, the maintenance of student files and records and the organisation of prize-giving ceremonies and undergraduate and postgraduate conferring ceremonies in line with RCSI policies and procedures.

## **2 CONTEXT FOR THE REVIEW**

### **2.1 MEMBERSHIP OF THE REVIEW GROUP**

The internal review was led by a four-member site-visit team comprising two external and two internal team members.

#### External

Ms Rachael Bevilacqua (Assistant Registrar for Student Affairs, St. George's University of London)

Ms Michelle Berigan (Examinations Officer, National University of Ireland Maynooth)

#### Internal

Dr Pauline Joyce (Director of Academic Affairs, Institute of Leadership, RCSI)

Mr Kieran Tangney (Associate Director, Department of Surgical Affairs, RCSI)

### **2.2 TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE REVIEW GROUP**

The review of the Examinations Office spanned over two days and consisted of meetings with Examinations Office staff, members of RCSI Senior Management, representatives from academic, administrative, support and technical staff in addition to undergraduate and postgraduate students of RCSI.

The objective of the PRG was as follows:

- To clarify and verify details in the Examinations Office Self Assessment Report (SAR)
- Verify how well the aims and objectives of the Exams Office are being fulfilled and comment on the appropriateness of the unit's mission, objectives and strategic plan
- Evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges as outlined in the SAR
- Assess the suitability of the working environment
- Comment on recommendations proposed by the Examinations Office in the SAR
- Make appropriate recommendations for improvement

### **3 STAFF AND FACILITIES**

The PRG should consider:

- Staff and Qualifications
- Professional Development and Review. How are the professional needs of staff and the skill needs of the unit identified?

#### **3.1 COMMENDATIONS**

3.1.1 Stakeholders commended the helpful, friendly and professional service provided by the Examinations Office.

3.1.2 Staff and undergraduate students praised the communication from the Examinations Office and the accessibility of documentation via Moodle prior to examinations. Satisfaction with information supplied via Moodle was such that students rarely had direct contact with members of the Examinations Team for additional information or clarification.

3.1.3 Academic staff appreciated having one point of contact via a named staff member in the Examinations Office for their examinations. They commented that staff displayed a high level of personal knowledge and had specific and transferrable skills.

#### **3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.2.1 The PRG agreed that all staff would benefit from a formal induction session to aid their understanding of the different assessment methods (OSCE, written viva, long-case, projects etc) and the different administrative requirements and limitations of each.

3.2.2 Staff should receive an annual Personal Development Review (PDR) to ensure that individual development needs and the needs of the department are identified and met.

3.2.3 The PRG acknowledged that the Examinations Team faced significant challenge as a result of increasing student numbers, the semesterisation and modularisation of undergraduate programmes, and the rapid expansion of overseas centres. It was recognised that it was increasingly difficult to manage the volume of work over the peak periods. The PRG recommended that the Examinations Office be adequately supported by internal or external expertise to undertake detailed capacity planning, process mapping and the production of Standard Operating Procedures which will assist them in determining the level of service that they can provide to, and should expect from, academic departments. Detailed capacity planning will demonstrate the need to fill vacant posts within the team or otherwise.

3.2.4 The PRG acknowledged that the planned development of the student records system and the introduction of Speedwell OSCE software would require the Examinations Team to receive greater IT support and training. An opportunity exists to train Examinations Team staff to be expert users of the assessment and reporting functionalities of the student records system (see 4.2.8).

3.2.5 The PRG recognised that the role of an invigilator at a written examination is different to that of an invigilator at a clinical examination. Invigilators felt less comfortable invigilating clinical examinations and examiners/departmental staff reported lower satisfaction with the service provided for clinical examinations. Currently an invigilators handbook is supplied to invigilators as they start. In

the main invigilators are paired with senior invigilators when they begin to work for RCSI. The PRG recommend that consideration be given to the development of a hierarchical structure for invigilators with the nominated Senior Invigilator assuming responsibility for the efficient operation of the examination hall and for ensuring that RCSI examination rules, regulations and procedures are complied with.

Since the PRG visit, work has begun with the HR department to enhance invigilator recruitment and a training piece is in development.

## **4 MISSION, STRATEGIC PLANNING, ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE UNIT**

The PRG should consider:

- The activities within the unit and how these are organised.
- Are there appropriate and effective committee structures in place to support the units' activities?
- Are the aims and objectives of the unit clearly articulated with agreed strategic goals?

### **4.1 COMMENDATIONS**

4.1.1 The PRG acknowledged that the Examinations Office were responsible for providing a core function of the RCSI. The PRG welcomed the appointment of the new Associate Director for Academic Affairs. The recent reorganisation of the role provided a much greater assessment focus. The PRG supported the greater presence of the Associate Director on relevant committees (AWG and PVAC) in order to provide a much needed increase in the profile of the Examinations Office.

### **4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Examinations Team could make some modifications to ensure that they meet their aims and objectives as outlined below:

- To issue results in a timely and accurate manner (see 4.2.1, 4.2.2, 5.2.2, 5.2.4, 7.2.3, 8.2.1, 9.2.2, 9.2.3)
- To ensure that student and candidate records are securely kept and are accurate and up-to-date (see 3.2.4, 4.2.8, 5.2.1, 5.2.3, 5.2.4, 9.2.6)
- To use available technology to manage examination processes (see 3.2.4, 4.2.8, 5.2.1, 5.2.2, 5.2.4, 9.2.6)
- To communicate effectively with internal and external customers (see 4.2.2, 4.2.4, 4.2.5, 4.2.7, 6.2.1, 6.2.5, section 8)
- To ensure that all examinations are conducted to the internal standards set by RCSI and benchmarked against best practice nationally and internationally
- To ensure a transparent and fair examination process

Opportunity exists:

- To continually look to improve processes
- To respond to feedback

#### Context

The PRG identified a need to gain a clearer understanding of the remit of the Examinations Office. They reflected on the unit's mission statement to, 'oversee and administer undergraduate and postgraduate examinations in Ireland and overseas'. The PRG found that over time numerous non-examination administrative functions had fallen into the remit of the Examinations Office, and that this, combined with the increased number of assessments and students, had led to a disparity in the level of service provided to academic departments and overseas centres. It was reported that a number of stakeholders did not adhere to deadlines for the submission of examination papers and the return of marked papers. This had a detrimental impact on the morale of the Examinations Office who were required to maintain high levels of accuracy in very narrow timescales. Concerns were raised that the volume of workload might compromise the standard of service the Examination's Office may be able to

provide in future. Stakeholders reported that there was room for improvement in the communication of deadlines from the Examinations Office. On the whole, internal departments commented that they initiated contact with the Examinations Office rather than the Examinations Office contacting them and they advised that more should be done to raise the profile of the team.

4.2.1 The PRG suggested that the production of one single undergraduate and postgraduate calendar (clinical and non-clinical, dates of the Board of Examiners meetings and conferring ceremonies) would, in the short-term, enable stakeholders to see the wide remit of the Examinations Office and identify peak periods and bottlenecks and may assist all parties in setting and meeting realistic deadlines for the submission of examination papers and marked scripts for data inputting.

Since the PRG visit, one composite calendar detailing both undergraduate and postgraduate examinations has been produced for 2012. The Examinations Office intend to include deadlines for corrections, modulation and examination board dates and work is in progress on this.

4.2.2 In the medium term, the PRG agreed that it was good practice to create a draft examinations calendar 18 months ahead of academic year. The planning should include a consultation phase with academic departments and overseas centres. This would consequently assist the Examinations Team in securing venues for written, clinical and special arrangement examinations. It might also help the unit recruit an appropriate number of invigilators to supervise special arrangement rooms. It was agreed that the Examinations Office should publish a final calendar 12 months ahead of the start of the academic year. This calendar should include timings and venues. It should be agreed that no changes will be made to the calendar once published.

#### Context

The Examinations Office reported that additional assessments were announced after the start of the academic year and which were not scheduled in the calendar. Additionally, they reported that Cycle Directors and Head of Schools made amendments to marks and standards after annual publication and that these were not always communicated to the Examinations Office in a timely manner. This resulted in individuals having to input additional marks and redesign Excel spreadsheets at short notice and this, if not managed, could increase the possibility of errors in the input data and in formulas which calculated the weighting and final summation of results. The PRG agreed that whilst the development of assessment to enhance reliability was positive, it would increase the workload for the Examinations Office.

4.2.4 The PRG saw future opportunity for the Associate Director of Academic Affairs to review in consultation with Heads of Department, Dean and Vice Deans the planning, coordination, design and implementation of assessments to meet the needs of staff, students and relevant stakeholders. In particular, opportunity existed to increase the input of the Examinations Manager into the development of new undergraduate and postgraduate assessment strategy. This would enable the unit to plan for the increase in workload and ensure that new ventures are costed and appropriate resources secured as part of the validation process. These developments are consistent with the RCSI's mission statement in respect to education, innovation and collaboration and reflect the core belief that assessments must be valid, reliable, transparent, defensible and fit for purpose.

#### Context

The PRG found some administrative functions fell within the remit of the Examinations Office, despite not being traditionally exams functions. These included:

- the production of student transcripts
- the formatting of examination papers
- the maintenance (where not directly a consequence of examinations) and archiving of graduated student files

4.2.5 The PRG supported the strategic development of a central Registry as this will create scope for the non-examinations functions to be reassigned to a more relevant team. A central Registry would assist the RCSI meet its mission in regards to collaboration and service.

Good practice could see the inclusion of the following teams as part of a central administrative facility for staff and students:

- Student Centre (front-facing unit)
- Admissions
- Student Records Team (see 4.2.6)
- Assessment Team
- Communications and Travel Team
- Student Welfare Team (disability etc)
- Student Affairs Team (appeals, complaints, discipline)
- Programme Management Team
- Alumni

Liaising with:

- Overseas centres
- Academic departments
- Salaries Department
- Finance Department
- Porters
- Library
- IT
- Student Finance and Fees Team

4.2.6 The PRG identified the need for the Examinations Office to determine the core functions of the unit in conjunction with internal and external stakeholders in order to provide a standard service for all users. They acknowledged the need to have data-driven planning, capacity planning and decision making. The introduction of formal Service Level Agreements with academic departments and overseas centres would create a strategic means to achieve the unit's mission. The newly devised workload could then be evenly distributed amongst team members.

4.2.7 The PRG identified that collaborative working practice should be established and encouraged to ensure that staff are able to cover for each other during peak periods or periods of absence (business continuity planning).

4.2.8 The PRG identified the immediate need for improved student records management across the RCSI. The size of the institution now dictates that there is a strong need for ownership of student data and there is a need to develop a central administrative unit/owner responsible for data management and the associated student records system (Student Records Management Team). The PRG strongly recommended that the RCSI utilise one student records system which is developed and supported by a software house (eg Quercus). It remains to be established whether the Quercus system is capable of processing both undergraduate and postgraduate student data. The proposed Students Records Management Team should work collaboratively with Quercus consultancy, QEO and the IT department to develop the functionality of the Quercus system and to train Registry and academic departments to use relevant functions. Additionally, the Student Records Management Team would be better placed to manage the following tasks which are currently undertaken by the Examinations Team:

- The rolling over of student progression data at the end of the academic year
- The production of annual returns (integrity of the data)
- Production of student transcripts
- Electronic archiving of student records after graduation

## 5 SERVICES, PROCEDURES AND PERFORMANCE

The PRG should consider:

Do the facilities and services provided by the unit meet the needs of the unit in achieving its aims and objectives?

Are there systems in place to ensure that the user needs are taken into consideration?

Are there systems in place to ensure that all activities are conducted to prescribed standards and requirements?

### 5.1 COMMENDATIONS

5.1.1 The administration of the training of MRCS examiners by the Examinations Office received high praise from those involved in the MRCS examinations. Examiners reported that they felt confident that the training enabled them to provide a fair and consistent assessment of standards.

5.1.2 The Examinations Team have been actively involved in the creation, testing and development of the new RCSI Postgraduate Application system. Staff will be able to transfer these skills and assist in the testing and development of the examination component of Quercus.

5.1.3 The PRG commended the use of Moodle to: publish examination calendars and timetables, send results directly to students on conclusion of the Examination Board and communicate with students via forum announcements. Undergraduate students reported high satisfaction with the Examinations Office's use of the system.

### 5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Context

The main office is an open plan office and has 7 desks, a counter, a customer waiting area, photocopier, printers, filing cabinets, MCQ optical reader and fax machine. The Examinations' Officer and Associate Director each have a separate office. A second store room is situated on the back stairwell and is used to store examination material such as examination scripts, MCQ sheets, pencils, mark sheets. The Examinations Office has a reinforced safe and the main and adjacent officers are locked when unattended. The PRG noted that open plan of the office may make it difficult for Examinations staff to hold confidential conversations.

A colour photocopier and filing cabinets are stored in a room adjacent to the Examination Hall. It was noted that there was no lock on the door of the photocopier/archive room and that it could be accessed at any time, including during the evening when the adjacent hall was used to entertain RCSI visitors on social functions. Additionally, it was highlighted that staff were unable to access to the colour photocopier when the examination hall was in use. Printing and photocopying facilities might be reviewed as it was reported that the current technology was unable to cope with the volume of examination papers to be printed and number of users. Technical support was unpredictable.

5.2.1 The PRG identified an opportunity for the Examinations Office to negotiate a contract with an external printing supplier for the production of written papers for larger cohorts. The PRG acknowledged that academic departments need to adhere to deadlines and that papers need to be finalised earlier than previously. The Examinations Office fully supports the introduction of a printing contact to produce papers.

5.2.2 With the large volume of marks manually inputted, there is a significant potential for human error. To minimise the occurrence of data transcription errors, the PRG recommend that the Examinations Office investigate the capacity and potential of Quercus or other customised system to facilitate direct mark entry or mark upload by departmental staff. The proposed introduction of scannable OSCE marksheets was supported by the PRG allowing for the reduction of human inputting error. Scannable OSCE and viva marksheets need to be designed and printed in-house. The PRG recommended that an additional scanner is purchased to process the vast amount of MCQ, OSCE and VIVA scanning at peak periods and to ensure that the risk of technical failure is managed. The PRG acknowledged that academic departments will be required to adhere to deadlines and that clinical marksheets need to be finalised earlier than previously. It will also no longer be possible to make last minute design and content changes to clinical examinations once the OSCE mark sheets have been printed as this will result in the electronic scanner no longer being able to read the paper marksheets.

5.2.3 The PRG recommended that the design of the Examinations Office be reviewed in order to provide a functional and secure working environment. The location and availability of photocopying and printing services is not optimal. There is opportunity to review the layout of the office to alleviate aforementioned issues. The following should be considered:

- Location of filing cabinets in a specified secure location not within the examinations office
- Desks being arranged into work pods to increase knowledge of others' workloads and improve collaborative working and skill sharing
- Partition off in-house printing and photocopying facilities to improve the work environment and examination security
- Creation of a designated area for scanning (eg two scanners connected to two networked computers)
- Restriction of student access to the office or alternatively to improve the screening at the reception desk to maintain a confidential, secure environment for the remainder of the office.

#### Context

The Examinations' Office use Quercus+ to maintain student records, manage the examination process, issue transcript and generate reports. The Examinations Team and other academic departments reported that Quercus contained inaccurate data and that long delays were experienced when downloading standard reports such as class lists. It was noted that the RCSI use a separate system (Active Directory) to email students and that the data contained within this does not correspond with information on Quercus.

5.2.4 The PRG support the development of Quercus system in order to meet DAS reporting requirements, improve the business process and to comply with legal requirements. The data in Quercus needs to be fully reviewed in order to identify any data shortfall or integrity issues. As part of the development, there is an opportunity to explore whether in the medium-term there is potential for students to view their own data (personal details, results, transcripts etc) via a web portal and edit their data where it is appropriate to do so. The PRG recommend that RCSI adopt a policy of maintenance of a single comprehensive repository of student data (Quercus) and that all allied systems (eg Moodle, Active directory, Discoverer etc) are linked (dynamically) to it and derive their student data from Quercus.

5.2.5 The PRG advocate institution-wide double marking of scripts and moderation with external examiners prior to the Examination Board meeting which will increase student confidence in the marking and ratification process.

## **6 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: STAFF, FACILITIES, BUDGET AND FINANCIAL ISSUES**

The PRG should consider:

Are there systems in place to ensure that the allocation and use of financial resources reflects and supports the quality aims and objectives of the unit?

Are they utilised effectively to ensure that quality targets are achieved?

### **6.1 COMMENDATIONS**

6.1.1 The vast majority of the 68 stakeholders interviewed were satisfied with the system of dealing on a one-to-one basis with a named person in the Examinations Office. There was broad recognition from stakeholders that Examinations Office staff managed and processed data in a constrained timeframe.

### **6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.2.1 There is a need for greater representation from the Examinations Team on senior committees to ensure that resources are allocated appropriately. The Examinations Team would benefit from having monthly operational meetings with a set agenda that encourage discussion and provide staff with an opportunity to raise issues and seek assistance.

6.2.2 There is opportunity to improve workforce and succession planning to ensure that staffing needs are met.

6.2.3 There is potential to re-design the Examinations Office to provide a more functional facility for staff (see 5.2.3).

6.2.4 The Examinations Office need to understand future demand (student numbers) to determine whether it is feasible to continue to hold examinations within the RCSI premises in the medium-term.

6.2.5 The introduction of Service Level Agreements between the Examinations Office, academic departments and overseas centres would solidify the expectations and requirements of all parties (see 7.2.7).

6.2.6 Detailed capacity and workforce planning as outlined in section 3.2.3 will determine if financial provision and resources are adequate to support the work load and deliverables required by the various service level agreements. This should be a continual process of review between the examination office management and their team. The required resources should be outlined in the formal RCSI budgetary process with approval for funding agreed as required to meet Service Level Agreement requirements.

6.2.7 There is an opportunity to review current processes using Lean/Business process improvement tools to eliminate areas of waste and duplication. This should become a continual journey of process improvement with key improvements/need areas selected to begin with. Staff would benefit from some

formal training in the necessary tools. Active staff involvement in this process will become a powerful means of assisting staff to improve the processes they work on day to day resulting in significant business and staff morale/empowerment benefits.

## 7 SERVICE USERS AND FEEDBACK

The PRG should consider:

Is feedback from users used to improve the quality of service or processes?

Are there Users Guides available for users?

Is there explicit information on service standards available to users?

Where do users find information on services and service standards?

### 7.1 COMMENDATIONS

7.1.1 The PRG commended the administration of the two day training course for membership examiners which is managed by the Examinations' Office.

7.1.2 Both undergraduate and postgraduate students praised the excellent communication from the Examinations Office prior to examinations. They found the examinations calendar, marks and standards, transcript request and mark recheck procedure easily accessible via Moodle (for UG) and via the RCSI website (for PG).

### 7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.2.1 The PRG welcomed the introduction of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) within the Examinations Office which defined all processes and increased consistency in how tasks are to be accomplished. They see future potential to enhance the SOPs through standardisation of the format which would increase readability.

7.2.2 The PRG identified the need for a formal service provision consultation to take place with key users. The introduction of formal Service Level Agreements (SLA) should help to address the disparity in service provided across departments (see 6.2.5).

7.2.3 To obtain internal RCSI consistency, the PRG recommend the development and implementation of standardised templates detailing the agreed and acceptable format of exam papers, mark sheets, exam results etc.

The Examinations Office staff welcome the introduction of a SLAs and standard templates. Since the PRG visit, a template for examination papers has been devised.

#### Context

The Examinations Office highlighted the additional administrative burden created by the increasing number of students requiring additional examination arrangements and the complexity of these arrangements. Additional requirements were sometimes only communicated on the day of the examination and venues and invigilators had become increasingly difficult to obtain at short notice. The PRG acknowledged the importance of this area of work and the requirement to ensure 'reasonable' accommodations were in place.

7.2.4 The PRG recommends that the Examinations Office work with the disability branch of Student Services to determine what are 'reasonable accommodations' and to provide a standard list of possible accommodations which can be achieved with current resources. The Examinations Office should specify the timeframe they require to put individual accommodations in place.

### Context

The Examinations' Office recruits and maintains a database of 40 invigilators. Policy dictates invigilators are booked 6 months in advance to supervise examinations throughout the year. Invigilators are responsible for the supervision of candidates and for ensuring that RCSI policy and procedures are observed. Invigilators are provided with a standard operational procedures document which is updated at the beginning of each academic year. The Examinations' Officer holds an annual meeting of all invigilators to discuss processes and procedures and potential problems. Invigilators are briefed before each examination with regard to the particular requirements by Examinations' Office staff.

7.2.5 The PRG recommended that more invigilators are recruited to the database.

7.2.6 The PRG recommended that annual training be mandatory for invigilators. Training should draw on the good practice identified as part of the training of membership examiners and should follow a similar format.

7.2.7 A standard process should be introduced for collecting scripts to ensure that no scripts or exam papers are removed from venues. Consideration should be given to the development and implementation of documented, standardised exam hall procedures to be operated in all venues thus ensuring consistency between venues and improving the student experience through consistency of action. The Examinations Office plan to introduce a standard announcement for written examinations that candidates must remain in their seats until scripts are collected.

## **8 COMMUNICATION AND STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS**

The PRG should consider:

The unit's internal and external communication systems, including mechanisms for communication between the unit and its user groups

The extent to which staff members contribute to the development of the college, the development and maintenance of standards in their particular area and the broader needs of stakeholders.

### **8.1 COMMENDATIONS**

8.1.1 The PRG commended the excellent use of Moodle and RCSI website to publish examinations documentation to internal and external stakeholders.

8.1.2 Internal and external examiners reported a positive and efficient experience when dealing with the Examinations Office in relation to the organisation of travel arrangements, fee payments etc.

### **8.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.2.1 Students reported an instance where there was a breakdown in communication over when their results were to be published on Moodle. Whilst students were informed that results were to be delayed, no indication was provided as to when they might become available. This led to students sitting by the computer for extended periods constantly refreshing the website. Such delays had a significant impact on some students who wished to take electives in North American Medical Schools in a subsequent year. The PRG recommended that any alteration to the date of publication be clearly communicated to students via email or Moodle.

8.2.2 The PRG identified a general lack of clarity around the level of service provided by the Examinations Office to academic departments and overseas centres. The increase in outward communication from the Examinations Office and the introduction of Service Level Agreements would solidify the function and remit of the unit. The PRG recommended that the Examinations Office call annual planning meetings with Cycle Directors and Heads of Departments and agree timescales and deadline for the submission of papers and the return of marked scripts. The PRG emphasised the importance of building in time to check and verify results.

8.2.3 The PRG saw an opportunity for the Examinations Team to contribute to the development and maintenance of standards in their area through knowledge sharing and collaborative working. The introduction of Standard Operating Procedures has started to address compartmentalised knowledge but there is potential for further development.

8.2.4 The PRG identified that the Examinations Office did not have a strong profile within the RCSI. The PRG identified the need to develop a stakeholder engagement strategy and clear communication strategy. The raising of the profile of the Examination Office must be a key strategy to enable the RCSI to deliver their mission in respect to innovation, collaboration and service.

# 9 ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

PRG should consider:

The SWOT analysis carried out by the unit with reference to the performance and achievement of objectives of the unit.

## 9.1 COMMENDATIONS

## 9.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>STRENGTHS</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience/Knowledge</li> <li>• Efficient &amp; Friendly service to staff and students</li> <li>• Loyalty</li> <li>• Centralised Postgraduate and Undergraduate exams</li> <li>• Meeting deadlines</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>WEAKNESSES</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff unaware of others workloads</li> <li>• Examination papers arriving late</li> <li>• Seeing students as paying statistics</li> <li>• Lack of space &amp; resources</li> <li>• Losing personal touch</li> <li>• Deadlines not met internally/externally</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>OPPORTUNITIES</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote &amp; Highlight work of Examinations Office within RCSI</li> <li>• Facebook Page</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>THREATS</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civil unrest in the Middle East</li> <li>• Economy</li> <li>• Negative feedback</li> <li>• Cutbacks in HR and general budget</li> </ul>

9.2.1 The PRG broadly agreed with the findings of the SWOT analysis undertaken by the Examinations Office. It was apparent from our meetings with stakeholders that staff in the Examinations Office were regarded as knowledgeable, hard-working and professional in manner. Longevity of service for many staff meant that they had acquired extensive knowledge of their area of expertise. Staff and students found that the service provided by the office was efficient and friendly.

9.2.2 The PRG would concur with the view of the Examinations Office that there are opportunities to increase the profile of the office within RCSI and to highlight the deadline-orientated nature of the work of the office. This could be partially achieved through an increased presence on relevant committees and proactive outward communication with stakeholders.

9.2.3 The PRG would agree with the Examinations Office self-analysis that it would be beneficial to address some areas of weakness such as adherence to deadlines internally and externally, issues with space and resources and greater awareness of workload of other colleagues within the office. The PRG would also stress that the office should undertake contingency planning so that in the event of an unexpected staff absence continuity of service to stakeholders is maintained.

9.2.4 The PRG recognises that, in order to counteract threats and risks posed by the rapid and continuing increase in student numbers, complexity of programme offerings and increasing overseas venues, the Examinations Office will need to utilise robust, accurate and reliable systems and implement deadline driven processes. The workload of the office in general and attaching to each post within the office should be reviewed, quantified and re-distributed if necessary.

9.2.5 The implementation of service level agreements with departments would assist the office by clarifying the service to be delivered and specifying the respective responsibilities. The introduction and circulation of standardised templates and agreed formats for presentation of documentation would reduce some of the workload of the Examinations Office but would additionally allow for better service delivery to students and departments.

9.2.6 The PRG recommend that the management and ownership of student data be reviewed. We strongly suggest that this data be recorded and maintained in a single repository (e.g. Quercus) with student data for all allied systems, reporting tools and exam-related stationery deriving from this repository. We would also recommend that current extensive manual mark entry process be systemised in a robust and reliable manner. The PRG suggest that the Examinations Office and RCSI in general would benefit from the introduction of a central Registry function with clearly defined roles, functions and responsibilities.