



**RCSI**

UNIVERSITY  
OF MEDICINE  
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SCIENCES

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# RCSI STUDENT ENGAGEMENT + PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT 2025-2026



SEPTEMBER 2025

RCSI, UNIVERSITY OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH SCIENCES

**The RCSI mission is to educate, nurture and discover for the benefit of human health. In leading the world to better health our vision is to create healthcare leaders who make a difference worldwide.**

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As healthcare educators, we believe that a culture of student engagement and partnership empowers students to develop as ‘enlightened professionals’ with the capacity to truly influence and transform human health in their professions. The RCSI Student Engagement and Partnership (StEP) programme is at the core of providing a distinctive and transformational educational experience enabling our students to engage as equal partners in RCSI’s key decision-making processes, in their education and research and in serving our wider communities. This meaningful partnership between our students and staff has cultivated an academic environment wherein students have real agency and have the opportunity to build the knowledge and skills that will enable them to become change-makers as they advance in their careers. I personally invite all our students to share our vision and become proactive partners in the years ahead.

**Prof Cathal Kelly**  
RCSI Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer/Registrar



The RCSI community thrives on collaboration, inclusivity, and a shared vision for progress. The StEP Agreement empowers students to actively shape their own educational journey. By fostering meaningful partnerships between staff and students, it strengthens our learning environment while equipping us with the confidence and skills to lead with purpose. This initiative reflects the innovative and student-centered spirit of RCSI, where every voice matters and every idea can create lasting impact. Together, we are shaping a culture of growth, resilience, and leadership that will guide us within RCSI and throughout our future healthcare careers.

**Faizah Alam**  
SU President 2025-2026



The StEP programme at RCSI is an invaluable opportunity for students to pursue partnerships across the university and help enact positive change in their community. Participation in the programme not only allows students to freely pursue projects and initiatives that they are passionate about, but students are also encouraged to develop and hone their skills beyond academia. Postgraduate students should definitely get involved, as the programme is a great way to take a leadership role while helping enhance the student experience!

**Joanne Chang**  
PGSU President, 2025-2026

## RCSI STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP (STEP) PROGRAMME

The RCSI Student Engagement and Partnership (StEP) programme is at the core of providing a distinctive and transformational educational experience that sets students up for career success at RCSI and as future health science professionals. The programme has demonstrated significant and sustained growth since its formal establishment in 2020-2021. With a marked increase in both StEP project numbers and student and staff partner engagement, the programme continues to flourish as a key enabler in fostering collaboration and innovation across RCSI.

scan here  
for ASPIRE  
Press Release



As external validation of the success of the RCSI StEP programme, RCSI was the recipient of the highly prestigious international **AMEE ASPIRE-to-Excellence Award for Student Engagement 2022**.

‘The ASPIRE award programme was established to go beyond the traditional accreditation process, and to identify, recognise and reward world-class excellence in education’.



## THE RCSI STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP (StEP) AGREEMENT IS AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN RCSI AND THE RCSI UNDERGRADUATE AND POSTGRADUATE STUDENT UNIONS

This Agreement defines how students and staff work together by way of shared goals to shape and ultimately enhance the student experience.

## Definition of Student Partnership

Through active student engagement, RCSI is nurturing, promoting and implementing a culture of partnership and inclusivity, where the expertise and perspectives of students and staff are equally valued and, by working together, we are driving positive change across the RCSI community for the benefit of human health.



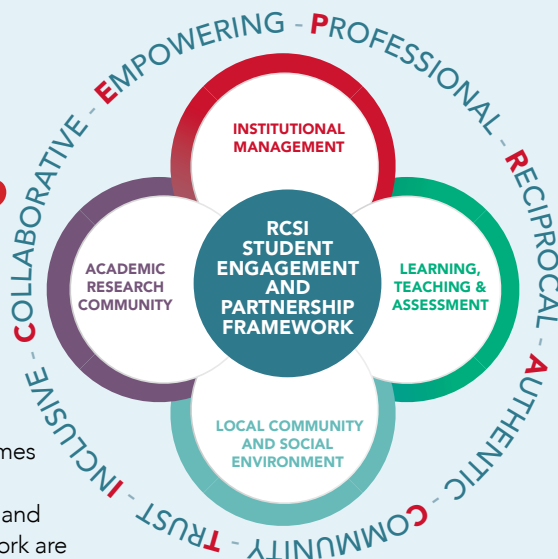
“It is a privilege to work with and for students and staff in building a universal culture of student engagement and partnership across all that we do in RCSI. Since launching our RCSI StEP programme in 2020-2021, we have witnessed significant growth in both StEP project numbers and student and staff partner engagement, a testament to the impact of the programme in fostering collaboration and innovation across RCSI. I wholeheartedly believe that these student and staff partnerships lead to lasting and meaningful changes that ultimately benefit all involved; the students, the staff and the entire RCSI community”.

**Prof. Celine Marmion**

Academic Director of the StEP Programme,  
Professor of Bioinorganic Chemistry

# RCSI Student Engagement and Partnership Framework

While partnership projects are built on RCSI's core values of **Respect, Collaboration, Scholarship** and **Innovation**, partnership project themes must fall under the remit of the RCSI framework for student engagement and partnership. Included in this framework are the guiding principles that RCSI consider to be best



## PRACTICE for Student Engagement & Partnership

**Professional:** The partnership is built on a professional relationship between students and staff, based on mutual respect, individual responsibility and appropriate accountability

**Reciprocal:** This is a mutual partnership where both students and staff are working with each other and benefiting from each other's expertise and perspectives. The benefits may differ for staff and students but they should be similar in magnitude

**Authentic:** This is a genuine partnership which equally recognises the value and expertise that students bring as learners and that staff bring as teachers or professional staff

**Community:** This is a partnership that values the unique contributions from both students and staff, enhancing a sense of belonging or community spirit between partners and the wider RCSI community

**Trust:** The partnership is built on trust where students and staff are engaging in open and honest dialogue, confident in the knowledge that discussions will be treated with fairness and respect

**Inclusive:** This partnership is inclusive of all students and staff, welcoming and embracing the many perspectives, talents and experiences that both bring to the partnership

**Collaborative:** This is a partnership that nurtures collaboration where both students and staff benefit and grow from the experience, learning from and with one another

**Empowering:** This is an empowering partnership for both students and staff where power is shared appropriately, respecting each other's viewpoints and working collaboratively to effect positive change

**Students will have an invaluable opportunity to partner with enthusiastic staff on exciting projects designed to effect positive change and improve the overall RCSI student experience.**

## **Benefits for Students**

- Opportunities to shape RCSI's ethos and mission by contributing to their university, promoting a sense of belonging and student success
- Expanding knowledge of teaching and learning pedagogies
- Contributing to academic research in medical and health sciences education
- Building leadership, teamwork, collaboration and inter-professional learning skills
- Expanding professional networks and developing future employability benefits
- Availing of StEP project financial support (bursary – not available if on payroll)



**Staff will have an invaluable opportunity to work in partnership with highly motivated students, availing of their expertise as learners and perspectives as students, on key projects designed to effect positive change and improve the overall RCSI student experience.**

## **Benefits for Staff**

- Gaining valuable insights into students' expertise as learners and their unique perspectives as key members of our RCSI community
- Exposure to new ideas, fostering innovations
- Research opportunities in medical and health sciences education
- Evidence of student engagement for promotion applications



**A mutual partnership where both students and staff will work with each other and benefit from each other's expertise and perspectives.**

## **Benefits for RCSI**

- Strong student voice leading to enhancements in governance and key decision-making processes, in education, in research and in local community engagement
- Improved sense of belonging by students, fostering a community of engaged alumni
- Providing additional opportunities for staff to engage with students, promoting staff satisfaction
- Enhanced academic programmes and research outputs
- Setting students up for career success and empowering RCSI graduates to become future change agents in the health sciences



For anyone considering joining the StEP programme, I highly recommend it! Whether you're passionate about improving education, conducting research, or simply looking to gain hands-on experience in project management, StEP offers an incredible platform to ensure that the perspectives of students and staff are equally valued. You'll contribute to the future of education at RCSI and gain valuable skills and experiences that will serve you throughout your career. I encourage our fellow students to seize this opportunity—get involved, talk about your ideas, and make a lasting impact on our amazing RCSI community!

Robin Olaonipekun  
Medical Student

# Benefits *for All*

In summary, participation in the StEP programme should be an enriching and empowering experience for both students and staff. It recognises the many and varied views, experiences and expectations of our diverse community of national and international students and staff. **Through partnership, students and staff work collaboratively to instigate real and enduring changes across RCSI, ultimately enhancing the overall student experience.**

This Agreement does not replace existing policies or strategic documents, rather it serves to define and enhance opportunities for student and staff engagement and partnership.

On an annual basis, the Agreement will be reviewed and partnership activities will be documented. These activities form the basis of the RCSI StEP Programme.

## Section A - Mechanisms *for* Student Engagement

This section outlines formal and informal ways for students to engage and take an active role across the University, **ensuring that students are a central part of decision-making and policy and procedure formation within RCSI. These platforms also provide opportunities for students to develop both personally and professionally.**

## Formal Mechanisms



The Irish Essential Drug List (IEDL) aims to develop a comprehensive essential drug list that reflects national priorities while also supporting medical and pharmacy students in building competence to ensure safe and effective prescribing practices. Working as a student partner on this StEP-funded project has been absolutely fantastic! Being a part of StEP-1 gave me invaluable insights into multi-disciplinary teamwork. Furthermore, working on a project that aligns with national healthcare priorities has deepened my awareness on the role of policy making and guidelines in shaping healthcare education and practice.

**Sahana Rajesh**  
Pharmacy Student

- **The Postgraduate Student Union (PGSU):** This is a democratically elected Body which represents the interests of all postgraduate students in RCSI. It comprises of six officers – President, Vice-President, Welfare Officer, Treasurer, Public Relations Officer and Events Officer. The PGSU representatives are members of a number of committees including the Medicine and Health Sciences Board, the School of Postgraduate Studies Committee and the Student Affairs Committee.
- **The Undergraduate Student Union (SU):** This is a democratically elected Body which represents the undergraduate student voice both internally and externally. It comprises of eight officers - President, Vice President & Societies' Officer, Education Officer, Cultural Officer, Events Officer & Treasurer, Events Officer, IT Officer and Welfare Officer. Student Union representatives are members of a number of committees including the Medicine and Health Sciences Board, Academic Council and the Student Affairs Committee.
- **The Sports Union:** This is the representative Body of all sports clubs in RCSI. It comprises of two officers, elected jointly by the SU and the Sports Co-ordinator. Appointments are made annually. The Sports Union works closely with the SU, sports clubs and those pursuing sports individually where their sport is not represented by an existing sports club.
- **The Student Council:** This comprises of all officers of the undergraduate SU, the Sports Union, and all undergraduate class representatives.

SECTION A -MECHANISMS FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT



Participating in the StEP programme at RCSI was not only enriching but truly empowering! The best part of StEP is working with staff from different Departments, engaging with students, and creating something impactful for future cohorts. It's a chance to be part of something bigger, shape the future for others, and enhance your own journey. I highly recommend it to anyone wanting to make a difference at RCSI.

**Jeena Khan**  
Medical Student

- **Clubs and Societies:** There are over eighty active Clubs and Societies in RCSI, which are led by students and supported both administratively and financially by the University. Opportunities are provided to students to participate and attend events and activities in addition to running the Club or Society by undertaking formal leadership roles including Captains/Chairperson, Treasurer, Vice-Captain/Vice President, Secretary etc.
- **Undergraduate Class Representatives:** Each class has at least two representatives with responsibility for providing feedback on student views related to academic and non-academic matters. Representatives are elected by students annually at the start of the academic year. They participate in a wide range of committees, working and focus groups throughout the University.
- **Membership of Committees, Working Groups and Focus Groups:** The University actively seeks student representation on academic and non-academic committees, working and focus groups.
- **RCSI Research Summer School:** RCSI is committed to supporting and nurturing our undergraduate students by offering them rewarding research experiences in which they partner with RCSI principal investigators on eight-week funded summer research projects, focused on the enhancement of human health.
- **Other Research Opportunities:** These include involvement with the RCSI Student Medical Journal (RCSI SMJ), the International Conference for Healthcare and Medical Students (ICHAMS), research seminars, the annual RCSI Research Day, availing of RCSI-funded research travel grants for participation at conferences and research postgraduate secondment placements, and active participation in projects embedded within educational and research programmes.

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A sincere thank you to the StEP programme for providing a platform to make a difference within the RCSI community and contributing to its rich history. In collaboration with the fantastic Careers team, we created a guidebook to help prepare students interested in applying to Canadian residency programmes. Partnering with staff was not only imperative to the success of the project, but made for a truly rewarding experience. I encourage all students to take advantage of this amazing initiative at RCSI. All it takes is one idea!

**Imran Haider**  
Medical Student

- **Teaching Opportunities:** Postgraduate students have the opportunity to actively contribute to undergraduate education programmes e.g. by teaching and assessing undergraduate laboratory practicals.
- **Peer to Peer (P2P) Programme:** This is a structured support and leadership programme with students providing peer teaching and peer mentorship to other students in the areas of academic and personal support and health and well-being promotion.
- **Student Ambassador Programme:** This programme is an exciting opportunity for RCSI students to work alongside the student recruitment team and academic staff, providing a valuable service to the wider RCSI community and prospective students around the world e.g. student ambassadors speak directly to prospective students about their own RCSI experiences through a range of communications channels. They also work in partnership with the student recruitment team to produce engaging content for RCSI social media channels, including, for example, Instagram takeovers whilst on rotation, clinical electives, and research projects.
- **Learning Communities:** Learning communities are an integral part of the teaching philosophy in the education of future healthcare professionals at the RCSI. Each Learning Community provide our students with an important sense of connection with the RCSI and an initial grounding as they adapt to university life in Ireland. At the RCSI, learning communities are: "...designed groups of students who are actively engaged in learning with and from each other" (*Eberts & Lenning, 1999*) and, our mission is to create a more collegiate, inclusive, engaging and social university experience for every student. We encourage all our students to maximise their time at the RCSI by making as many connections as possible through on-campus teaching, societies or other co- and extra-curricular initiatives such as the StEP programme, the Research Summer School and the International Citizenship Programme.

## Informal Mechanisms

**Active student engagement is not restricted to formal representative structures. *All students are encouraged to become active partners in shaping the life of the University.***

### OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

- **Improving** the quality of the student experience by providing honest, constructive feedback by taking part in surveys, focus groups and other feedback opportunities and availing of RCSI's 'open door' policy.
- **Building** life skills by **contributing to the wider community** through a diverse range of volunteering initiatives which include ambassador roles, Teddy Bear hospital, community engagement activities e.g. Grinds Club, primary and secondary school visits, transition year Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine (STEMM) engagement activities.
- **Actively** engaging in **cultural diversity** initiatives to promote cultural competence such as The International Citizenship Award, International Night, International Food Fair and the International Students' Day.
- **Developing networking skills** by participating in RCSI events such as Alumni reunions.



Working on this StEP-funded project 'The Arts & Medicine: Working Together' has been an incredibly rewarding experience. Collaborating in true partnership with both staff and students brought a richness to the process that deeply enhanced our outcomes. Together, we explored ways to integrate arts and humanities as a meaningful tool to develop empathy, compassion and wellbeing in practice - ultimately fostering a more holistic and human-centred approach to healthcare education. The creativity, insight, and mutual respect within the team made this memorable—one that I believe will leave a lasting impact on both teaching and learning.

**Emma Daly**

Senior Social Worker, Centre for Mastery: Personal, Professional & Academic Success (CoMPAS)



## Section B - A Core Strategic Enabler

RCSI places student partnership as a core strategic enabler in striving to transform healthcare education, research and service. **Section B outlines RCSI's ongoing commitment to student engagement and partnership, provides exemplars of successful partnership initiatives from 2024-2025 and highlights priority partnership areas for 2025-2026.**



scan here for  
RCSI Strategic Plan  
2023-2027

CASE STUDY 1

# Empowering Future Researchers Through Global Collaboration: The International Impact of RCSI's StEP Programme



Our goal was to create something dynamic, engaging, and, above all, useful. The result is the world's first student–academic collaboration in global surgery crossing borders - capitalising on international networks and advancing RCSI's teaching offerings by partnering deeply with the student community.

**Dr. Jakub Gajewski**  
RCSI Institute of Global Surgery

The RCSI StEP programme has been instrumental in connecting students with global research leaders, equipping them with enhanced research capabilities, and boosting their employability. A flagship result of this initiative is the co-creation of 'Essential Research Skills: A Global Surgery Perspective', the world's first undergraduate research methods course focused on global surgery.

Co-developed and co-delivered by students and staff from RCSI and Stellenbosch University, South Africa, the course exemplifies the core values of StEP: student–faculty collaboration, practical learning, and international partnership. Piloted in Cape Town (2024) and Dublin (2025) with over 50 participants, the module employs highly interactive methods: Socratic dialogue, case studies, and educational games that foster critical thinking and real-world application. The curriculum prepares students for clinical and academic careers, instilling skills valued by employers and doctoral programs. In summary, the StEP-supported global surgery module showcases the transformative potential of student–faculty partnerships.

**StEP STAFF PARTNERS:** Dr. Jakub Gajewski, Programme Director (Research) and Dr. Chiara Pitallis, Research Fellow, School of Population Health, RCSI Institute of Global Surgery.

**StEP STUDENT PARTNERS:** Celina Flocks Monaghan, PhD Scholar, School of Postgraduate Studies  
Sophia Downey - School of Medicine

CASE STUDY 2

# Empowering Communities Through Student-Driven Global Health Initiatives: The Impact of Chagas Hub Ireland

Chagas disease, a potentially lifethreatening parasitic illness, remains a hidden health issue across Europe, despite its significant burden in Latin America. With growing Latin American migration to Ireland, early detection and awareness of this neglected disease are more critical than ever to improve migrant health outcomes. In response to this emerging public health challenge, a new student-led initiative—Chagas Hub Ireland—was established through the support of RCSI’s StEP programme. Inspired by the UK Chagas Hub, medical student Julia Victoria Segatello Martins worked in partnership with Dr Eoghan de Barra, Senior Lecturer in International and Tropical Medicine at RCSI, and Dr Natalie Elkheir, founder of the UK Chagas Hub and member of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine to develop Chagas Hub Ireland. This represents a significant step towards addressing Chagas disease within Ireland’s healthcare landscape.

The initiative reflects a student-led, scalable approach to global health challenges. Recognising that the Brazilian community represents the largest Latin American population in Ireland—and drawing on her own identity as a Brazilian in Dublin—Julia



ensured the StEP-funded projects were grounded in trust, cultural understanding, and community empowerment. The inaugural screening event in RCSI (May 2025) exceeded expectations, welcoming 55 individuals, all united by a shared goal: to access preventive care and advocate for their right to donate blood—a right restricted to Latin Americans in Ireland due to lack of available Chagas disease screening.

It has been the most special experience of my time at RCSI to connect with my own community and lay the foundation for a project that has the potential to transform access to healthcare for Brazilians in Ireland. Chagas Hub Ireland is just beginning, but this first screening event has shown the power of collaboration, community, and student-led action.

**Julia Victoria Segatello Martins**  
Medical student

**StEP STAFF PARTNER:** Dr Eoghan De Barra, Department of International and Tropical Medicine  
**StEP STUDENT PARTNER:** Julia Victoria Segatello Martins, School of Medicine

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## CASE STUDY 3

# Enabling the Establishment of RCSI Healthy Campus and Development of the first RCSI Healthy Campus Action Plan



This StEP project was selected as a Higher Education Authority Healthy Campus Case Study and may be found [here](#)

See also the RCSI News Release [here](#)

RCSI signed up to the Healthy Campus Charter in early 2022 and committed to developing and implementing an Action Plan to embed health and well-being across RCSI for staff and students. The RCSI StEP programme aligned very well with the Healthy Campus Charter as both aim to promote positive health amongst community members. This alignment allowed RCSI's StEP programme to facilitate a comprehensive review of Healthy Campus activities across the RCSI landscape, the StEP project details of which are outlined below.

The StEP project "RCSI Healthy Campus Self-Review" was carried

out utilizing the UK Universities self-review tool as a vehicle to conduct a comprehensive assessment of Healthy Campus initiatives across the university. The StEP project resulted in the identification of strengths and areas for improvement within RCSI.

The RCSI Healthy Campus Committee is now firmly embedded with the overall RCSI governance structures. The foundations laid by this StEP project enabled the RCSI Healthy Campus Committee to develop a Healthy Campus 5 Year Action Plan outlining the RCSI vision, objectives, and key performance indicators related to health and well-being initiatives across RCSI.

**StEP STAFF PARTNER:** Professor Suzanne McDonough, Head of School of Physiotherapy and Chair of the RCSI Healthy Campus Committee

**StEP STUDENT PARTNERS:** Dhruv Juvan, School of Medicine; Sophia Khan and Ciara Melody, School of Pharmacy & Biomolecular Sciences

## CASE STUDY 4

# Hands-On Sustainability: The Glove Recycling Initiative Project



Single-use nitrile gloves are a major source of waste in university laboratories, yet most end up in landfill or incineration despite being recyclable under the right conditions. The Glove Recycling Initiative Project (GRIP), supported by RCSI's StEP programme, addresses this challenge through a staff-student collaboration combining practical waste reduction with research on sustainable behaviours.

Led by Dr Graeme Kelly, Department of Chemistry, and medical student Nekhil Govender, GRIP introduced a glove collection and recycling system across teaching laboratories, supported by clear signage, staff training, and close collaboration with waste contractors. The model now diverts approximately 30,000 gloves annually and has been replicated in the new RCSI School of Dentistry, embedding sustainable practice across multiple disciplines.

For me, the real value of GRIP is that it brings hands-on environmental action together with student partnership. When we work side by side, we're not just cutting waste, we're learning what really drives sustainable behaviour in future generations. It makes environmental responsibility part of our everyday lab culture, and it gives students the confidence and skills to be part of climate solutions. The StEP programme really made this possible by giving us the structure, funding, and space to turn ideas into real, high-impact change.

**Dr Graeme Kelly**

Senior Technician in Chemistry

**StEP STAFF PARTNER:** Dr Graeme Kelly, Department of Chemistry

**StEP STUDENT PARTNER:** Nekhil Govender, School of Medicine

**RESEARCH PARTNERS:** Dr Andrea Doyle, RCSI SIM Centre; Dermot Daly, RCSI SIM Centre; Bryan Shiels and Kevin Armstrong, RCSI Estates



## CASE STUDY 5

# Recycling of polystyrene packaging in RCSI Laboratories

Laboratories across campus buildings generate large volumes of polystyrene packaging which is costly to manage and environmentally unsustainable. By piloting a recycling polystyrene StEP project, the key deliverable was to reduce waste volumes and disposal costs while supporting RCSI sustainability commitments and achieving Green Lab accreditation across all laboratories

## PROJECT ACTION PLAN

### Part (A) Waste metrics

Identify suitable space for collection & organise the collection of polystyrene boxes each week for 6 weeks from all RCSI labs

### Part (B) Cost effectiveness

Contact recycling companies and compile quotes & compare the average cost per square meter or Kg with the average cost of our general waste

### Project Outcomes

Identified designated location for polystyrene collection.

- » Obtained 1.5 cubic metre bags from Rehab Recycling for polystyrene collection
- » Collected and recycled 7 bags over 6 weeks, equivalent to about 95 kg of polystyrene reformed into blocks for housing insulation supporting the circular economy



- » Projects required and achieved buy-in from lab managers, porters, cleaning teams, and college-wide communications, demonstrating systemic outreach.
- » Reduced contamination in other recycling streams by proper segregation.
- » Students gained hands-on learning in waste management, sustainability, and quality improvement, with one project incorporating ethics approval and survey data.
- » Total collected since 2023 is 1580 kg (1.5 Tons)

The polystyrene recycling project was intended as a short-term initiative but proved so successful that the Estates Department permanently adopted the waste stream, embedding it into routine campus operations.

**StEP STAFF PARTNERS:** Seamus McDonald, Senior Laboratory Technician and John O'Brien, Head of Laboratory Operations, School of Pharmacy and Biomolecular Sciences

**StEP STUDENT PARTNERS:** Paula Klavina, Postdoctoral researcher

**RESEARCH PARTNERS:** Bryan Shiels and Kevin Armstrong, RCSI Estates

CASE STUDY 6

# Empowering Collaborative Innovation: Enhancing Auscultation Learning Through Partnership

Auscultation is a critical yet inherently challenging skill for medical students to master, requiring repeated exposure and real-time clinical practice, and cannot be effectively learned through theoretical understanding alone. To address this challenge, Dr. Shona Pfeiffer and medical student Patrick Kennelly co-developed a unique, digitally-enhanced auscultation resource, supported by RCSI's StEP Programme. This innovative digital resource consolidates otherwise inaccessible auscultation material, enhancing clinical preparation and advancing student-led, independent learning. Applicable across disciplines such as medicine, nursing, pharmacy, physiotherapy, and physician associate studies, it bridges theory and clinical practice, promotes essential skill development, and facilitates clinical integration. Beyond student learning, it supports faculty by complementing

teaching methods and enriching the delivery of pathology lectures and clinical tutorials.

Dr. Pfeiffer and Patrick Kennelly have co-presented this work by invitation at a National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning in Higher Education seminar hosted by RCSI in Feb 2022, 'Developing a Community of Practice - Student Partnership in Curriculum Design', and at the Irish Network of Healthcare Educators (INHED) Annual Meeting 2022, 'Supporting Learners; Thriving not just Surviving', under the category of Education Development.

This digitally-enhanced resource has received 11,123 online views and 3346 downloads to date (Sept 2025). This collaboration not only addresses key barriers in the teaching and learning of complex skills in auscultation but also highlights the value of student-faculty co-creation in advancing medical



education. Reflecting on this initiative.

The opportunity to collaborate with a student partner on this initiative yielded a wealth of invaluable insights and experiences. Our objective was to develop a resource that is accessible, encourages meaningful engagement, and supports collaborative approaches to teaching and learning. The resulting resource reflects the depth and quality of contributions from both student and educator, demonstrating the value of co-creation in advancing innovative and impactful educational practices.

**Dr Shona Pfeiffer**  
Department of Physiology & Medical Physics

**StEP STAFF PARTNER:** Dr. Shona Pfeiffer, Department of Physiology & Medical Physics

**StEP STUDENT PARTNER:** Patrick Kennelly, School of Medicine

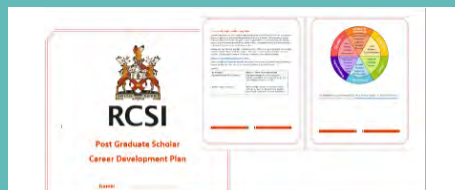


## CASE STUDY 7

# RCSI Postgraduate Scholar Career Development Plan

The co-design and roll out of the RCSI Postgraduate Scholar Career Development Plan was as a direct result of a StEP programme initiative. This plan was designed to help scholars develop key skills to become effective researchers and succeed in their chosen career. It was also intended to provide scholars with a greater understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement, which can then be used to identify appropriate development opportunities. In completing the Career Development Plan, the scholar first identifies their character strengths, using a free survey tool available <https://www.viacharacter.org/character-strengths>. This identifies 24-character strengths, the top 5 of which are known as Signature Strengths. It also indicates the scholar's lesser strengths (the bottom 5). Using this information, the scholar then refers to the Vitae Researcher Development Framework which they can freely access using their rcsi.com credentials. Vitae sets out the wide-ranging knowledge, intellectual abilities, techniques and professional standards expected to do research, as well as the personal qualities, knowledge and skills to work with others and ensure the wider impact of research.

The premise behind the Career Development Plan was that the scholar could not only determine their strengths, but also areas they needed to develop



competency in, enabling them to become more effective researchers. By incorporating the plan into PC01: Postgraduate Essentials, a core compulsory module for all scholars, it ensured the Career Development Plan was uppermost in scholars' minds from the beginning of their research programmes in RCSI.

As with all the StEP initiatives I've been fortunate to participate in, it has been a very rewarding experience personally and professionally. It's been an opportunity for the scholars and I to develop a strong rapport with each other and it also breaks down barriers in terms of academic vs professional services. With Jennifer and I, we both felt our opinions and input were valuable and validated. Having only been with RCSI since 2021 and having neither an academic nor scientific background, I've always felt my contribution to the StEP programme has been welcomed and appreciated

**Bess McBride**

School of Postgraduate Studies

Find the presentation at the National Student Engagement (NStEP) Programme Networking Event, RCSI, 28th November, 2023 [here](#)

**StEP STAFF PARTNER:** Bess McBride, Learning and Development Coordinator, School of Postgraduate Studies

**StEP STUDENT PARTNER:** Jennifer Donnelly, PhD scholar, Centre for Positive Health Sciences

# StEP Level 1 Funded Projects 2024-2025

A total of 32 StEP level 1 funded projects were successfully completed in 2024-2025



Engaging in a StEP-funded project on enhancing access for public and patient involvement (PPI) in RCSI research has been a fantastic experience! I've learned so much about PPI and had the fantastic opportunity to collaborate with a community group in the process! Along with my student and staff partner, we developed an infographic introducing the concept of PPI in research and we also developed a toolkit for researchers which directs them to services within RCSI and online resources that will help to make their PPI opportunities more accessible.

**Emily Murray**  
Pharmacy student

1. Molecules and Microchips: The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Precision Medicine
2. Partnered for Progress: A Collaborative Approach to Strengthening Demonstrator Training
3. Voices in Confidence: Developing Bespoke Disclosure Training for RCSI students
4. The Peer-led Clinical Skills Kit Initiative
5. 'Students Supporting Students' – Co-Design and Development of Workshops to Equip Students with Tools and Skills to Support Their Peers Undergoing a Mental Health Challenge
6. Leading Improvements in Medical Education for LGBTQIA+ Health
7. Assessing the Utility of AMBOSS® in Medical, Physiotherapy, Pharmacy and ATT Education
8. Fostering Success: Supporting International Nursing Students through Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
9. Assessing Climate Change Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices Among Medical Students
10. Expanding Student-Led Health Inclusion Placements in Physiotherapy
11. Designing a Homeless Healthcare Curriculum
12. Can you find what you are looking for? A usability and design review of RCSI Library's online service portals (RCSI Library Website, Library Guides and the Library on Moodle)
13. An Emergency in the Medical Curriculum of RCSI
14. Expanding Student-Led Health Inclusion Placements in Physiotherapy

# StEP Level 1 Funded Projects 2024-2025

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15. Cardiovascular Physical Examination Video Update: An Evaluation
  16. Enhancing the 2025 PRiCAN Summer School with Student-Led AI Workshops
  17. Enhancing User Friendliness: Transforming Student Life HQ
  18. Transgender Healthcare in Medical Education: Improving Graduate Communication Skills and Patient Experiences through Inter-Professional Teaching
  19. REACH RCSI Health Education Workshops
  20. Irish Essential Drug List (IEDL): A Delphi Study for Consensus Development
  21. Interviews Unplugged: A CaRMS Specialty Cheat Sheet
  22. Implementation and Quality Analysis of Guidelines for Recruitment of Student Interviewers for the RCSI Alumni eNews
  23. Fostering Success: Supporting International Nursing Students through Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
  24. EPIC: Educating Pharmacy graduates In Cancer Communication Skills
  25. Supplemental Exam Success Hub (SESH)
  26. Healing Beyond Borders: Building Resources to Support Students from Conflict-Affected Countries
  27. The Arts & Medicine: Working Together
  28. An Analytical Review of StEP Projects: Evaluating UN SDG Integration and Alignment with the RCSI Strategy
  29. Enhancing Bystander Intervention in the Instance of Cardiac Arrest by Mapping AED Locations in Dublin City
  30. Enhancing Access for Public and Patient Involvement in RCSI Research
  31. Adapting to University and Supporting Success for Future Nurse Managers and Leaders
  32. Recycle 2 Revive - Can You Save A Life?

# StEP Level 2 Funded Projects 2024-2025



Our StEP-funded project focused on co-designing student-led physiotherapy placements to enhance learning while supporting underserved populations. It was a meaningful opportunity to blend education with real-world community impact. This project allowed us to engage deeply with both service users and fellow students, developing skills in communication, service design, and critical thinking. It also helped us understand the broader role of physiotherapy in health inclusion and built our confidence in working with diverse communities.

**Danielle McFadden**  
Physiotherapy student

A total of 27 StEP level 2 funded projects were successfully completed in 2024-2025

1. Student-led Interprofessional Community-Engaged Clinics
2. In what ways can co-creation and development of a collaborative serious game, using an established methodology, support IPL curriculum and faculty development?
3. Student Correspondents - Alumni Publications
4. Peer Led Clinical Skills Kits Initiative
5. Global Paediatric Surgery E-Learning Translation
6. Digital Health & AI in Focus: A Student-Led Review for Future-Ready Learning at RCSI
7. Reflecting Reality - Mapping Skin Tone Diversity in RCSI Clinical Education Materials
8. Voices in Confidence: Developing a bespoke disclosure training for RCSI students
9. Exploring Staff Perceptions of the THEP 2 Curriculum: Impacts on Teaching, Learning, and Curriculum Integration
10. Exploring Operational Delivery, Peer Evaluation, and Competency Development in Transnational Medical Programmes Using Case-Based Learning (CBL)
11. Enhancing Integration and Academic Success of Adult Nursing Students through a Structured Alumni Mentoring Programme
12. Preparation for North American Residency – A CareerHub Landing Page
13. Med-Lingua- Preparing medical students to communicate in multi-lingual consultations
14. Think Before You Sink
15. Arts and Medicine: The Creative Pulse of Care
16. A Homeless Healthcare Curriculum

Introduction

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for Students

for Staff

for RCSI

Mechanisms

Strategic

Student Success

Funding

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# StEP Level 2 Funded Projects 2024-2025

- 17. An Emergency in the RCSI Medical Curriculum
- 18. Leading improvements in LGBTQIA+ Education
- 19. Project StEP-Together (RCSI Global Medical Initiative - Malawi)
- 20. MENA Clinical & Research Pathways Hub: An RCSI Guide to International Electives, Observerships & Research Placements
- 21. SAFE: Student Academy for First Response and Emergency Training
- 22. Beyond the Classroom: Recognising and Mapping Student Achievements
- 23. Pharmacy Horizons: Mapping Career Pathways for Kuwaiti Graduates
- 24. Optimising the learning community experience at RCSI
- 25. SPGS Mentoring Programme
- 26. Mapping Health Professions Curricula to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals through Student Partnership
- 27. RCSI StEP Tool Kit - Design, Develop, Disseminate to Promote Student Engagement and Partnership and to Enhance RCSI's International Reputation

## *Section C - RCSI* **Student Success**

Developing a vision and understanding of ‘Student Success’ has been identified as a fundamental priority for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Ireland. This pursuit has been spearheaded by The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. Student Success is now embedded within the RCSI Strategy 2023-2027





Being involved in the StEP programme at RCSI has been an engaging and rewarding experience. I really enjoyed the opportunity to collaborate with staff and students from different disciplines, which highlighted the importance of partnership in shaping education and research. Contributing to the design of curriculum content on homelessness was particularly meaningful, as it demonstrated how our work can make a positive impact on future students. I would encourage others to get involved in the programme, it is a fantastic opportunity to learn, share ideas, and make a difference.

**Precious Olatunji**  
Pharmacy student

## RCSI definition of 'Student Success'

*'At RCSI, student success is defined as empowering each student to fulfil their unique purpose personally, academically, and as future health science professionals. In our diverse student community, student success is cultivated in an inclusive, collaborative, and positive learning and social environment, driving a journey of self-discovery, reflection, and personal and professional growth. Student success is further enhanced through meaningful partnerships and shared responsibilities, ultimately enabling each individual to prosper and achieve their full potential at RCSI and beyond'*

Guided by this definition, RCSI has a mechanism in place to identify gaps and to prioritise areas in which to further promote 'Student Success'. This is facilitated through the RCSI StEP programme where, each year, students and staff will be afforded the opportunity to work on StEP-funded projects aligned to 'Student Success'. Student Success is also firmly embedded within the RCSI Strategy 2023-2027 as one of the four strategy pillars 'Education and Student Success'.

A new **Vice-Chancellor Student Success Champion Award** was launched in 2024-2025 – 'to recognise RCSI staff and teams who have gone above and beyond to promote student success thus empowering our students to excel and reach their greatest potential, personally, academically and as future health science professionals' The inaugural Vice-Chancellor Student Success Champion Award was presented to Professor Celine Marmion, Professor of Bioinorganic Chemistry and Academic Director of the RCSI StEP Programme, in January, 2025



Professor Cathal Kelly, RCSI Vice-Chancellor presenting the Vice-Chancellor Student Success Champion Award to Professor Celine Marmion



# Section D - Funding

Funding will be provided, as an integral part of the StEP programme, in the form of a bursary to students in recognition of the unique perspectives and expertise that students bring to partnership projects

STEP PROJECT LEVEL	MAXIMUM HOURS PER WEEK	MAXIMUM HOURS/ WEEKS IN TOTAL	STUDENT BURSARY	PROJECT SUPPORT
1	*3 HOURS	30 HOURS	€600	€250
2	35 HOURS	8 WEEKS	€2000	€1000

\* For level 1 funded projects, students may work on their projects during semester time but should allocate no more than 3 hours per week. The number of hours may be increased if during mid-semester breaks or vacation time.

*It is important for students to note that it is their responsibility to ensure that the project does not compromise their scholarly commitments or any sponsorship obligations if relevant.*



Scan here for further details in relation to the **StEP programme** including the StEP project application process and submission deadlines, bursary details and post project reporting requirements.

# Priority Project Themes For 2025-2026

In response to student feedback and following consultation with students and staff, partnership projects that fall under the following general themes will be prioritized for funding in 2025-2026

## Student Success

with a focus on (i) enhancing opportunities for interprofessional learning, mapped to UN SDG 3 'Good Health and Well-Being; (ii) enhancing frameworks to support students' academic, personal and holistic success (iii) an exploration of students' motivation/pride in their chosen field; (iv) transition to university – adapting student skills ; (v) supplemental examinations – identifying and overcoming challenges

## Student Engagement and Professionalism Community & Belonging

Building strong networks through collaboration, mentorship, and engagement across different disciplines and student groupings

## Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

Promoting EDI in education and in university-wide initiatives

## Role and Impact of AI and Digital Health in Healthcare-Based Undergraduate and Post-Graduate Education

## RCSI Healthy Campus



Our StEP-funded project enabled us to develop REACH RCSI Health Education Workshops, empowering primary school students with essential health knowledge while developing our own communication and leadership skills. Through this StEP project, we gained hands-on experience in health education, improved our teamwork and public speaking skills, and strengthened our connection with the community.

**Sara Carvalho**  
Medical student

# Representative RCSI StEP Programme Achievements in Numbers



**95 RCSI Student Partnership Champion Certificates** awarded to **Staff** in **2024-2025**– those who partnered with students on StEP-funded projects



**32 StEP level 1 and 27 StEP level 2** funded projects in 2024-2025



**101 RCSI Student Partnership Champion Certificates** awarded to **Students** in **2024-2025** – those who partnered with staff on StEP-funded projects



**346 Staff partners** who have engaged in StEP-funded projects since 2020-2021



**296 Student partners** who have engaged in StEP-funded projects since 2020-2021



**170 StEP-funded projects** since the establishment of the StEP programme in 2020-2021



**Internationally Recognised Programme**  
Recipient of AMEE  
ASPIRE Award for  
Excellence in Student  
Engagement 2022



Working together to ensure inclusive teaching and learning will ensure that all our students thrive. The leadership demonstrated by both staff and students, working in partnership to promote positive change across RCSI, is inspiring. The last few years have seen some truly excellent student-staff partnerships and it is an honour to celebrate this success with the RCSI Student Partnership Champion Awards

**Professor Tracy Robson**  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs

## Section E: RCSI STUDENT PARTNERSHIP CHAMPIONS 2024/2025

*Congratulations to the following students who received RCSI Student Partnership Champion Awards in 2024/2025*

Hanan Aburawi	Hazel Dwyer
Jack Adams	Aideen Edmondson
Waheebah Ahmed	Karim Fouad
Mohammed Alam	Victor Frimpong
Suood Alameeri	Emily Gannon
Ra’eesah Ali	Nekhil Govender
Esraa Almafrefji	Imran Haider
Nicolai Anderson	Emily Hamilton
Kira Antonyshyn	Noor Saeed Shaikh Isa Ali Hasan
Ian Appelbe	Evin Haworth
Kurdo Araz	Jasmine Henain
Aisha Alameen Betro	Leen El Sheikh Idris
Timeyin Boyo	Mya Jain
Alyssa Brown	Harshita Kamal
Alexander Carroll	Conor Kearns
Sara Carvalho	Tom Kehoe
Sidonie Chard	Monica Keogh
Aishani Chowdhury	Haya Khan
Stephen Clare	Jeena Khan
Elise Coughlan	Shahad Khawjah
Sara Daoud	Raghad Khosaf
Dina Darweesh	Vedika Khurana
Sean Davey	Matthew King
Hriday Deepak	Matthew Linvill
Sophie Dolan	Michael MacDiarmada
Molly Doyle	Brooke Mackinnon
Brian Durkan	



My StEP-funded project aimed to enhancing bystander intervention in the instance of cardiac arrest by mapping AED locations in Dublin city. Working on this StEP project was an incredibly rewarding experience for me. It gave me the opportunity to apply what I've learned in a meaningful, real-world context and deepen my understanding of community health and emergency response. Through collaboration with peers, staff, and student societies, I developed important skills in teamwork, communication, and project coordination. I learned how to bring different perspectives together to co-create something impactful, and I felt a real sense of ownership in the process. Personally, it was empowering to see how student-led initiatives can drive change and make a difference. This project strengthened my confidence, my ability to lead, and my belief in the power of collaboration within the RCSI community.

**Aisha Betto**

Advanced Therapeutic Technologies student

## Section E: RCSI STUDENT PARTNERSHIP CHAMPIONS 2024/2025

*Congratulations to the following students who received RCSI Student Partnership Champion Awards in 2024/2025*

Eileen Maguire	Rebecca Roque
Alexandrah Mah	Danielle Roth
Thrshith ManiPrabuKumar	Shreya Sankar
Linda McDonnell	Kavya Sarraf
Danielle McFadden	Nadim Sayani
Lillian Moore	George Sedra
Mark Mulvey	Reema Kumari Shankar
Ailbhe Munro	Riya Manas Sharma
Síobha Murphy	Marina Shatskikh
Emily Murray	Syed Muhammad Sherdil Sherazi
Collette Murtagh	Deborah Shinyanbola
Maya O'Donnell	Molly Rose Soberman
Sophie O'Connor	Elizabeth Ann (Lisa) Stallwood
Aindrias O'Floinn	Shuang Lan Sun
Elochukwu Okafor	Aiden Swartz
Robin Olaonipekun	Le-An Telesford
Emmanuel Olaonipekun	Jeuel Ugboro-Shanomi
Precious Olatunji	Jordan Vaarsi
Oluwatofunmi (Tofunmi) Oluwajuyigbe	Viktoria Vargas
Yeoyeol Park	Addison Verrett
Matthew Preteroti	Jasmine Virk
Rhieya Rahul	Andy Wang
Sahana Rajesh	Carmella Ylagan
Amritha Ramachandran	
Atharv Reddy Katam	

RCSI STUDENT PARTNERSHIP CHAMPIONS 2024/2025

*Congratulations to the following staff who received RCSI Student Partnership  
Champion Awards in 2024/2025*

Dr. Nora Al-Shawee	Méabh Hennelly	Candice Nallet
Dr. Stephanie Annett	Fiona Houlihan	Caoimhe Ní Néill
Dr. Rob Argent	Liz Hughes	Prof. Alfred Nicholson
Kevin Armstrong	Prof. Jan Illing	Claire Nugent
Dr. James Barlow	Benjamin Jacob	Dr. Máirtín Ó Maoláin
Niamh Barrett	Patrick Keegan	Dr. Emer O’Brien
Tatiana Bezdeneznykh	Dr. Caroline Kelleher	Dr. Emily O’Conor
Michelle Burnett	Dr. Graeme Kelly	Michelle O’Toole
Dr. Dara Cassidy	Maria Kelly	Emily O’Brien
Chiara Cecchinelli	Prof. Fiona Kent	Prof. Gozie Offiah
Stephen Clare	Dr. Bridget Kiely	Eric O’Flynn
Grainne Corcoran	Dr. Nitya Kumar	Dr. Aisling O’Leary
Dr. Rory Crean	Dr. Tommy Kyaw Tun	Dr. Sarah O’Neill
Sharon Cullen	Dr. Karen Kyne	Laura O’Neill
Christine Cullen	Alan Maddock	Dr. Izabella Orban
Dr. Michael Daly	Prof. Celine Marmion	Ines Peric
Emma Daly	Elizabeth (Beth) Mason	Ann Piercy
Naoise Darby	Bincey Mathew	Dr. Chiara Pittalis
Prof. Sudipto Das	Christine McAuliffe	Prof. Patrick Redmond
Dr. Eoghan de Barra	Bess McBride	Bryan Sheils
Niamh Dillon	Prof. Jean McBryan	Kathryn Smith
Suzanne Donnelly	Dr. Caroline McCarthy	Dr. Murine Spooner
Jenny Duffy	Prof. Gerry McElvaney	Prof. Seamus Sreenan
Dr. Shane Dunlea	Sinéad McGonagle	Dr. Niall Stevens
Prof. Michelle Flood	Prof. Kevin McGuigan	Prof. Judith Strawbridge
Dr. Melanie Föcking	Dr. Marie McIlroy	Dr. Ellen Stuart
Gemma Foley	Sara Mohamed	Catherine Sullivan
Kenny Franks	Prof. Frank Moriarty	Ciara Tallon
Dr. Jakub Gajewski	Julia Morrow	Dr. Tommy Kyaw Tun
Dr. Sherly George	Dr. Claire Mulhall	
Dr. Judith Gilroy	Niamh Mullen	
Helen Heery	Conor Murney	
Hollie Heffernan	Dr. Bridget Murray	

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If you have any questions or would like to get involved please contact [studentpartnership@rcsi.com](mailto:studentpartnership@rcsi.com)



**Professor Celine J. Marmion**

Academic Director of the RCSI  
StEP Programme



**Ms Emily O'Brien**

RCSI StEP Programme Coordinator



**RCSI STUDENT  
ENGAGEMENT  
+ PARTNERSHIP  
AGREEMENT**

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