Response to the External Reviewers Report for the BSc in Human Nutrition and Dietetics (Trinity College Dublin/Dublin Institute of Technology)

The School of Medicine, Trinity College Dublin, and the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) would like to thank the Review Team for their work and input to the review of the BSc in Human Nutrition and Dietetics Programme in November 2015. All involved found it to be an engaging and informative process. We welcome the Reviewers’ report, their positive comments and their appreciation of the challenging environment faced by Trinity College Dublin and the Dublin Institute of Technology. The report highlights positive aspects of the Programme and identifies many of its strengths and achievements, while at the same time identifying areas for improvement.

The reviewers were requested to assess the effectiveness of the governance between Trinity and the Dublin Institute of Technology with respect to the delivery of the joint Programme; to review the programme curriculum and comment on the academic standards, the appropriateness of the learning outcomes, and the alignment of the programme learning outcomes with a Level 8 Award on the National Framework of Qualifications; and to review and comment on the procedures that support the quality assurance of teaching, learning and assessment on the programme including the quality assurance of the student experience and of teaching staff.

The key strengths identified by the Review Team include:

- The development of this joint Programme by Trinity and DIT has been pioneering in the education of dietetics and nutrition professionals leading to the development of dietitians with strong employability skills and competence
- Both Trinity and DIT are committed to working together and continuing the joint provision of the Programme in the future
- Students are of a high quality and are well equipped to undertake employment in the health service
- Student feedback is taken on board and used to inform decision making
- The development of Professional Practice Modules is commendable and will help to give students a clear professional identity
- Solutions are already in place to address several weaknesses identified in programme administration arising from two institutions being involved
We note and support the recommendations of the Review Team, in particular the recommendations to:

- Implement proposed changes to the Programme curriculum
- Implement proposed new governance arrangements via a clearly defined process to ensure a timely changeover period
- Establish ways to strengthen working relationships across both institutions (Trinity and DIT) in terms of networking and sharing of resources
- Explore new ways of expanding the delivery of research-led teaching
- Establish a clear process by which interprofessional learning will be implemented across the programme
- Continue to respond to student feedback on ways to improve their learning experience including:
  - Improved Trinity induction sessions
  - Fostering the alumni concept
  - Increase in teaching focused on developing employability skills for outside of the clinical setting
- Develop a strategy for potential service user involvement in programme design and delivery to better understand the patient perspective
- Review the role of the Practice Education Co-ordinator and staffing levels to support clinical placements
- Focus on further education and support for Practice Educators including:
  - Development of placement monitoring to evidence adequate quality assurance mechanisms
  - Development of a strategy to strengthen the interface between academic and practice placement staff in order to improve the experience of both Practice Educators and students on clinical placement
- Further explore post-registration teaching opportunities to include short courses, Masters modules and awards and Professional Doctorate programmes
- Identify a clear programme identity with “unique selling points” in anticipation of new competition in dietetics training from other Colleges
- Clarify and streamline how quality assurance mechanisms will be delivered and co-ordinated across both Institutions both at School and Quality Office level
• Define and establish clear channels of communication between Trinity, DIT, HSE and the Dept of Health in relation to issues relevant to the programme
• Advocate with the HSE and the Dept of Health on the need for HSE-funded Clinical Practice Placement Education Tutors nationally in line with other allied healthcare professions

In addition, and as noted by the Review Team, there is acknowledgement by both Trinity and DIT that effective governance of a joint programme between two institutions has increased complexity, for which additional support and resources may be required.

The School of Medicine and DIT are very appreciative of the time and attention given by the Review Team and welcomes their comments as constructive and relevant to the strategic development of the future of the Programme. We look forward to working with the Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences and with School and College staff across both institutions to address the key recommendations arising from this Review report and will prepare a detailed Implementation Plan outlining the timeframe for implementation.

_______________________________  _____________________________
Professor Paul Browne    Associate Professor Mary Hunt
Head of School of Medicine   Head of School of Biological Sciences
Dublin Institute of Technology

_______________________________
Professor Mary McCarron
Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences

Date:  1st April 2016