

## Education Visitors' Report Recognition of a Satellite Programme

*This form is to be completed by the panel secretary following an approval visit to an institution.*

<b>Name of institution</b>	McTimoney College of Chiropractic (MCC) – Ulster
<b>Programme name</b>	Master of Chiropractic – (part-time)
<b>Start date of programme</b>	January 2025
<b>Date of visit</b>	8 & 9 October 2024

<b>Panel Chair</b>	Rabia Ahmed
<b>Panel Members</b>	Mark Webster
<b>Observers</b>	Penny Bance
<b>Panel Secretary</b>	Elizabeth Austin

<b>Introduction</b>
<p>After several discussions with the GCC during 2023, MCC submitted documentation in September 2024 for consideration through the <a href="#">GCC satellite recognition process</a>.</p> <p>MCC completed the Stage 2 Outline Business Case template and the Stage 3 mapping document, focusing primarily on Section 2 of the Education Standards. The Approval Panel consisted of Rabia Ahmed and Mark Webster, who supported MCC with the implementation of the new Education Standards. They were familiar with the programme, having undertaken a comprehensive review of the programme in March 2024.</p> <p>Following a desk top analysis, a visit to the satellite campus was arranged for 8 &amp; 9 October 2024 to tour facilities and meet with staff and students.</p>

<b>Staff members, groups, facilities and resources seen</b>			
	Yes	No	N/A
Principal	✓		
Representative(s) from validating institution	✓		
Senior management responsible for programme resources.	✓		
Programme Leader	✓		
Faculty staff	✓		
Students	✓		
Patients			✓
Clinic facilities	✓		
Learning Resources ( e.g. IT, library facilities)	✓		
Other	Please specify		

## How areas of concern were addressed

During the pre-meeting on 26 September, the Panel highlighted areas of interest that had been identified in the submission analysis that would be explored in further detail at the visit. During the event these were addressed through a series of meetings with senior staff and stakeholders.

### **8<sup>th</sup> October**

#### **Meeting with staff responsible for student support / academic administration**

The Panel met with three members of staff with responsibility for student support and academic administration.

The Panel queried how students will access student support services while on the programme. The team explained that this would primarily be through MCC. The College aims to ensure that students on this programme have the same experience as other MCC students, with support services and processes clearly outlined in handbooks, the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), and during induction. The VLE is a key platform for disseminating important messages related to student support. The Panel noted that although students will not use Ulster University's resources for support directly, they may be signposted to them when appropriate.

The team explained that every student is assigned a personal tutor, with each campus location having its own tutor for each year group. While the formal route is through personal tutors, students will be encouraged to reach out to any staff member they feel comfortable with. There is a dedicated programme support email box for student issues which the team monitor and respond to.

The team shared that the existing student support services are deemed sufficient for the new campus, but provisions are continually reviewed to account for peaks and troughs in demand throughout the academic year.

The Panel queried how staff were supported regarding workloads. The team explained that staff support and well-being are monitored through metrics and data to aid decision-making on staff recruitment. Newer staff members come from backgrounds in well-being support, reducing the reliance on a single individual for student support. Staff expressed to the Panel that they feel well-supported in their roles.

Regarding study skills, the Panel was provided with an overview of the support that will be available to the students, from induction, encouraging students to take an active role in their learning. Guides on referencing and academic writing are available through the VLE, with the learning support manager providing additional support. While Ulster University has its own study support available, MCC services are preferred as they are tailored specifically to the students' needs.

Students will also have access to a well-stocked physical library space on campus, benefitting from resources established for other healthcare courses. Panel members observed this resource during the campus tour and noted that it was a highly adequate resource.

Students will be classified as associate students of Ulster University, granting them access to all facilities on the Ulster campus.

### **Campus overview and tour**

The College's MChiro programme will be taught on the Health Sciences Faculty, Magee campus, of the University of Ulster in Londonderry/Derry. The Panel toured the facilities and observed a range of health sciences programmes including diagnostic radiography, podiatry, speech therapy, the medical school and the dedicated premises allocated to the chiropractic programme. The programme lead for medicine confirmed that the chiropractic students would have access to the anatomy teaching facilities, including the anatomage tables.

The Panel was informed that because the programme is largely delivered at a weekend when the University is very quiet, thought has been given to how chiropractic students can make the most of their time on campus. The plan is that teaching on a Friday will take place in the physiotherapy department, within the health sciences building, and on each Saturday and Sunday, dedicated premises are being made available in the Nursing and Midwifery Council testing facility in Foyle House, a short walk away, where teaching and practical training will take place. The Panel observed the ample space for the chiropractic provision, with opportunities for expansion, if larger cohorts are recruited over time.

The SMT confirmed that all necessary equipment such as chiropractic benches have been ordered and these will be available in advance of commencement.

Following the tour, the Panel noted it was evident that Ulster University had made significant investment in its resources.

### **Clinic facilities**

The College's chiropractic training clinic will commence in 2028, the year before it is needed, for final year interns. The Panel toured the established podiatry in-house clinic and learned that plans are currently being developed for a large multidisciplinary clinic to incorporate occupational therapy, physiotherapy and speech and language therapy. The Principal informed the Panel that the chiropractic programme has requested six treatment rooms within this new facility.

### **9 October 2024**

#### **Panel meeting with Senior Management Team (SMT)**

The Panel met with five members of the Senior Management Team

The Panel was informed that in line with its experiences in developing its satellite campuses in Manchester and Madrid, the Ulster campus will be based on centralised administrative functions, integrated use of existing teaching staff to ensure equivalency of delivery, and increasing employment of local teaching and administrative staff as the programme develops.

Operating the model used to start and establish the Manchester and Madrid campuses, the College will utilise local staff as well as staff from Abingdon and Manchester to teach the curriculum. Based on its location, Ulster University faculty staff will teach basic science modules in year one and year two of the programme. The Principal shared that this model ensures the quality of delivery is comparable across multiple delivery sites, as well as providing the platform to establish and grow local staff for the future.

The structure of the programme involves teaching on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays once a month over four years, followed by a fifth year dedicated to a full-time clinic. Nine members of staff from MCC and three from Ulster University will teach across the years, with the current programme lead based in Abingdon.

The Principal shared that this ensures the content is fully covered by experienced faculty and supports not only programme quality assurance but also interaction and engagement between staff in different locations.

The Panel was informed that the Northern Ireland programme will fall under their established quality assurance processes to ensure all aspects of the curriculum, teaching quality, student progress and outcomes, are measured, reviewed and actioned to assure the student experience and the overarching educational consistency of the programmes. Likewise, students on this programme will complete the same assessments, at the same time as students on other campuses to ensure equivalency of outcomes and are subject to the same criteria for progression and appeals. Assessment review takes place across all programmes and is implemented across all programmes if changes are made.

The SMT shared that all clinical training will follow the policies and procedures of the student community clinics in Abingdon and Manchester. The Clinic Manager in Manchester will have responsibility in Ulster for training new clinic supervisors, overseeing the equivalency of clinical training between campuses and also for oversight of the establishment of the new clinic.

The Panel was informed that although marketing for this year started later than planned, there has been notable interest, with 152 expressions of interest and 10 strong leads from prospective students. The SMT expect to enrol around 15-20 students once the programme is fully established, with six students being the break-even number. Interest has come from both Northern and Southern Ireland, and there is significant potential to further develop the programme and raise its profile. There is an aspiration to introduce a full-time programme in the coming years.

Regarding input from local stakeholders, the Panel was informed that the primary stakeholder is the Chiropractic Association of Ireland, with whom MCC has been in discussions for over four years. The Association supports the introduction of a part-time model to widen participation to chiropractic studies. Local chiropractors have shown enthusiasm, particularly in supporting student observations. Two large clinics in Londonderry/Derry have expressed a keen interest in hosting these observations. However, since the students won't all be based in Ulster, placements will also be sought closer to students' home locations.

Regarding internal placements, the SMT explained that the Ulster campus will offer placements for chiropractic students in the physiotherapy and podiatry clinics. The

Head of School stated that the University's strong Interprofessional Education (IPE) ethos applies to the chiropractic programme and they work closely to ensure all students learn together. In addition, the University offers multidisciplinary Spring and Summer schools.

The Panel asked the SMT to explain what staff support was in place for members of the College who regularly attended the different campuses throughout the UK and Europe. The SMT informed the Panel that MCC has been actively building its faculty over the past few years, and the staff see their roles as developmental opportunities. The majority of the faculty are associate faculty members, many of whom are scaling back their own chiropractic practices to focus on becoming educators. Across the college, there are around 70 associate faculty members.

Every student year group is assigned a personal tutor as the first point of contact for support. If issues escalate, they are directed to senior staff, who ensure that faculty members receive appropriate support. MCC has also factored in travelling time for staff, adjusting timetables to accommodate it. For example, following a visit, staff are not timetabled for the next day, offering a buffer to manage workload effectively. The faculty remains adaptable to change, ensuring staff well-being is prioritised if circumstances shift.

The Panel noted that discussions are ongoing regarding collaborations between MCC and Ulster for research initiatives. There is also the potential for staff to begin PhD programmes. The SMT hope this collaborative approach will enrich the academic environment and provide valuable research opportunities for staff.

### **Meeting with the Course Delivery Team**

The Panel met with seven members of the course team, including three lecturers from Ulster University

The Panel queried how the relevant legislative, regulatory, policy and healthcare differences between Northern Ireland and mainland UK would be taught and assessed. The team responded that, similar to the Madrid programme, the programme will align with GCC regulations, ensuring that all staff members are well informed of their responsibilities in business law and ethics. The programme will cover relevant legislation for both mainland UK and Ireland, including consideration of both Irish and Northern Irish laws.

The team shared that The MChiro will be taught in line with the five year MChiro taught in Abingdon and Manchester which also commences in January each year. The final year clinic will commence in January 2029 and complete in December 2029.

The Panel was informed that teaching will be predominantly face-to-face, once a month on a Friday, Saturday and Sunday during the pre-clinic years with some online sessions when appropriate. Faculty members will provide adaptable resources for individual lecturers, while central programme notes will be available to ensure all learning outcomes are met, regardless of the teaching location. Teaching will utilise a blend of face-to-face, synchronous, and asynchronous learning formats. Additionally,

support from the technical team will be available to assist students with any technical difficulties.

Regarding assessments, the team stated that the assessment strategy remains consistent across the programme, with assessments centrally produced and implemented. While efforts will be made to synchronise exam timings across locations, a secondary bank of exams will be available to accommodate differing schedules if required. All examinations undergo a rigorous internal review by the exams committee, followed by external checks to maintain high standards in the marking process.

When asked how the Ulster programme will benefit from being delivered on a larger campus, the team highlighted the benefits from the extensive resources at Ulster University to foster interdisciplinary collaboration among various healthcare disciplines. Plans are underway to explore teaching links across healthcare courses, while ensuring parity of delivery across all campuses. Currently, shared teaching initiatives are being piloted in summer schools, utilising resources such as Anatomage tables and promoting interaction among students. The Panel noted that the Human Function module has been successfully taught by Ulster University staff, and there is a strong desire to further develop this collaboration by integrating staff from the first year of the programme.

When asked by the Panel how a sense of community and parity is achieved across the campuses the team explained that building a supportive community is crucial, with staff playing a key role in this endeavour. The programme lead for year one will facilitate online combined classes, and students will attend the Manchester and Ulster summer schools together. As with students on other campuses, students on this programme can access funding for trips and accommodation to allow them to feel part of the wider McTimoney community.

Furthermore, discussions regarding research and staff development are ongoing between the Director of Research and Ulster University, focusing on opportunities for both students and staff. Plans to develop a PhD programme are also underway.

### **Meeting with the clinic team**

The Panel met with two members of the clinic team who provided an overview of how the clinic will be set up and run.

The new building, currently under construction, is set to house a multidisciplinary clinic that will integrate physiotherapy, occupational health, speech therapy and chiropractic. The chiropractic training clinic will commence in 2028, the year before it is needed, to build a patient base. Two students who are currently enrolled on the Manchester programme, but based in Northern Ireland, will complete their clinical year at the Ulster campus in 2028 to test the clinic model - similar to the implementation in Madrid.

The team explained that the Clinic Manager in Manchester will have responsibility in Ulster for training new clinic supervisors, overseeing the equivalency of clinical training between campuses, and for oversight of the establishment of the new clinic. The clinic is expected to operate three to four days a week to meet the anticipated demand. The

new clinic will comprise six rooms, in addition to a reception area and a rehabilitation space.

The Panel was given an overview of how the observation and placement provision will operate, with plans for two large clinics in Londonderry/Derry and the Ulster University medical school to support the initiative. Prior to their clinical year, students will also shadow practitioners in the new clinic building. A pre-clinic summer school will also be organised, and during their clinical year, students will undertake additional placements, with support from the University.

Regarding external observations, the Panel was informed that it is essential that observations are conducted solely in regulated environments. A list of registered chiropractors, with the Chiropractic Association of Ireland, will be provided to students and the programme handbook will outline clear rules of engagement, directing students to address any issues with the module leader or designated student support staff. If the College place students directly in a setting, a standardised quality assurance checks will be undertaken, as they are in the UK.

### **Meeting with students**

The Panel met with two final year physiotherapy students.

The students shared positive experiences of the Ulster campus, emphasising the benefits of smaller student numbers. They appreciated the intimate and friendly atmosphere, where they were able to build strong relationships not only with fellow physiotherapy students but also with peers from other health science disciplines. The close-knit environment contributed to a collaborative and supportive learning experience.

While the students informed the Panel that they had not frequently used student support services, they were consistently reminded of the resources available to them. Support for academic writing and general well-being was clearly signposted, making it accessible when needed. One student mentioned utilising these services for dyslexia support, noting that the funding and additional assistance provided were excellent.

The students highlighted several key facilities they regularly use, including the university's sports and gym facilities. They also took the initiative to establish a Physiotherapy Society this year, further enhancing the student experience. Both students spoke highly of the library, particularly praising the availability of electronic resources and the one-on-one sessions with librarians, which were especially helpful for dissertation support.

The students shared their experiences of interdisciplinary learning which they stated was an important aspect of the programme. Every Friday, during their first year, they participated in combined group sessions with students from various health and life sciences professions. These sessions, allowed students to work together on joint projects, fostering a multidisciplinary approach to healthcare education and encouraging teamwork across different specialisations.

### Account of verbal summary given to the institution

During the final meeting with the Senior Management Team, the Panel Chair stated that its indicative recommendation to the Education Committee is to:

- recommend approval of the programme with one condition

It was agreed that the approval report would be shared with the College for fact checking by 25 October 2024 for return to the GCC by 7 November 2024. The report will be presented to the Education Committee at its November meeting. If it is agreed that the programme meets all the Education Standards, the Committee will recommend to the Council of the GCC that the programme should be approved.

The Council of the GCC considers and decides whether to accept the recommendation of the Education Committee.

The Panel Chair concluded that subject to approval, the Panel looks forward to returning to the campus once the clinic is established.

### Recommendation to Education Committee

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Approve <b>without</b> conditions                               |   |
| 2. Approve <b>with</b> conditions                                  | ✓ |
| 3. No approval (insufficient evidence due to serious deficiencies) |   |

### Conditions for the institution with reasons and timeframes in which they are to be met.

1. Develop the clinic ahead of the need for it for pre-clinical and clinical training. (The GCC will want to assure itself of these arrangements through a visit to the clinic).

### Recommendations for the institution

1. Review whistleblowing policy to incorporate section 15 'Managing problems or concerns' of the GCC Supplementary Advice to the Education Standards 2023: Clinical Placements.
2. To review staffing and expand as need or demand require.

## Commendations to the institution

The panel would like to commend:

1. The collaborative relationship developed with Ulster University.
2. Widening access to the chiropractic profession through the provision of a PT programme on the island or Ireland.
3. The development of future research collaboration with Ulster.

Signed

*Rabia Ahmed*

Panel Chair

Date: 24/10/24