

Appendix 2:

EDUCATION AND HEALTH SCIENCES RESEARCH PRIORITIES

The four priorities described below represent EHS research strengths and specialization and provide an overview of the core foci of EHS research.

Optimising healthcare: In the context of “making knowledge work”, the focus of this theme is on improving patient outcomes through continued innovation-driven, value added research. The is multi-faceted but can be described as: developing inventories of service provision through audit, assessment of access and engagement with stakeholders; interrogation of dedicated databases regarding population health and illness; developing analytical insight in asset utilisation, facility and patient management to deliver evidence-based advances in processes, technologies and devices; interdisciplinary evaluation of public health; and engagement with population health promotion. In addition, there is a clear emphasis on efficiently and effectively translating scientific discoveries into practical benefit for patients and, more broadly, for society. Designing and evaluating innovative evidence-based rehabilitation interventions is central to this theme. Rigorous methodological approaches are applied to programme design, implementation, evaluation and service delivery in order to optimise client outcomes. This theme includes the identification and prevention of risk factors; accurate diagnosis, assessment and treatment; and addressing the scope of client rehabilitation and management.

Physical activity & human performance: EHS has a thriving research community in physical activity, food for health and health and in human performance. This includes the use of physical activity in order to improve health, of wellbeing, activity and participation across the life course. Research included in this theme examines the relationship between sedentary behaviour, physical activity, diet and health across the lifespan. Physical activity in people with musculoskeletal conditions, chronic pain, inflammatory arthritis, neurological conditions (for example Multiple Sclerosis, Stroke and Parkinson’s disease) is another important area of research, as well as human performance in sport, and the biomechanics, physiology and psychology of human performance. This theme includes the use of a range of technologies to screen, monitor, and inform users (therapists, researchers and clients) regarding levels of physical activity, and bio-psychosocial models are used to explain the correlates and determinants of physical activity in the different populations. This information underpins the design and evaluation of interventions and exercise programmes to optimise physical activity.

Professional practice and education: Professional practice and education underpin the faculty of Education and Health Sciences programmes and have critical relevance to the Education and Health sectors within Ireland and internationally. Teachers’ professional practice is typified by a commitment to catering for the needs of an increasing diverse group of learners, the utilisation of evidence-based pedagogies and professional collaboration with all education partners (both within the school and the wider community). Within this context there has been an increase in research focusing on innovations in teaching, learning and

assessment and the broader professional context in which teachers work. This theme aims to further develop this understanding and explore its relevance to initial and continuing teacher education. The provision of health care is highly dependent on practitioners who provide the services, whether they are students or therapists, as well as the context within which these services are provided. There is an increase in research activity relating to the provision of such care, including the education of students and practitioners; the historical context of practice; clinical decision-making and the use of evidence based practice. The studies in this theme investigate issues related to professional practice - including learning in both classrooms and in health-care settings; exploring how students and practitioners make clinical decisions; and analysis of the wider influences on the development of health practice and professions. These studies are focussed on building sustainable healthcare provision through communities of practice.

Social Inclusion: Supporting equality (societal and health) across the life course involves promoting inclusion, participation and resilience within communities where positive health outcomes and access to services are compromised. These circumstances are shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources at global, national and local levels. The Faculty of Education and Health Sciences has developed a strong multi-disciplinary theme on influences related to societal participation, in relation to lifestyle, community, health and education. There are thriving research groups involved in basic, applied and translational research on social issues, inclusion, collaboration, community relations and social change, with health and wellbeing at individual and social levels being key foci.