

Health Care Policy and Practice in Ireland

SAR HS 425

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Class Times: TBC

Venue: See Calendar

Course Description

Health care policy and practice in Ireland: how can these be described and understood? How have policy and practice evolved in the 20th century, and more particularly in the era of almost continuous healthcare reform since 2005? How can the fragmented and two-tiered system be improved? These are key questions now, following the launch in 2017 of the ten-year Sláintecare healthcare programme. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, caused by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome CoronaVirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) has further challenged all states, populations and health systems globally; how have the Irish state and health system been impacted by, and responded to, the pandemic? During this course students will discuss these questions and will bring insights from their experiences and knowledge of other health systems, and from their concurrent internships.

Students will first be introduced to the economic, cultural and social influences on Irish health care policy and practice. Specifically the role of the church, state and non-state actors in this development is necessary to understand contemporary challenges for the delivery, financing and governance of health care in Ireland. The impact of and responses to the recent pandemic form the context for current analysis. The six building blocks of the World Health Organisation (WHO) health system framework will be used throughout the course as a way to analyse the Irish health system and compare it with other systems, to achieve desired outcomes. These building blocks are: service delivery, health workforce, information, medical products vaccines and technologies, financing and governance. Students will demonstrate their understanding of Irish healthcare policy and practice through a project, an essay and an examination.

HUB Learning Outcomes

Social Inquiry I (one unit)

- Students will identify and apply major concepts used in the social sciences to explain individual and collective human behavior including, for example, the workings of social groups, institutions, networks, and the role of the individual in them.

Global Citizenship and Intercultural Literacy

- Students will demonstrate, through comparative analysis, an understanding of global diversity as expressed in at least two different languages, cultures, religions, political systems, or societies..

To meet the Hub areas above, on completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Discuss the meaning of health, health policy and health systems, using the six building blocks of the WHO health system framework; (Social Inquiry I)

2. Analyse the economic, cultural and social factors that influenced the development of healthcare policy and practice in Ireland; (Global Citizenship and Intercultural Literacy)
3. Evaluate health service delivery structures, financing and governance in Ireland; (Global Citizenship and Intercultural Literacy)
4. Analyse health workforce challenges facing health systems in Ireland and internationally; (Social Inquiry I)
5. Analyse the role of information and information systems in health care; (Social Inquiry I)
6. Analyse challenges in meeting demands for medical products, vaccines and health technologies; (Social Inquiry II)
7. Evaluate healthcare reform strategies and impacts on access, coverage, quality and safety, to meet the goals of health systems (including equity, health improvement, efficiency, responsiveness and risk protection); (Global Citizenship and Intercultural Literacy)
8. Compare the effectiveness of the Irish healthcare system with other health care systems. (Global Citizenship and Intercultural Literacy)

Instructional format

Class time will be used for a combination of lectures, discussions, project work and presentations. Field trips to healthcare settings will be organised to supplement class-room learning, where feasible. Students will be given a break over the course of each three-hour lecture.

Recommended sources

Although the two texts below are available and useful for historical context, there are no recent comprehensive text-books that adequately meet the needs of students on this course. Specific reading will be recommended and made available for each course topic.

- Brady, A-M (2010) Leadership & Management in the Irish Health Service. Dublin: Gill & MacMillan
- Burke S (2009) Irish Apartheid: Healthcare Inequality in Ireland. Dublin: New Island

Additional reading

Buse, K., Mays N. & G. Walt (2010) Making Health Policy: Understanding Public Health, London: OUP. Available online at

<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.474.6452&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

Commission on Patient Safety and Quality Assurance. 2008. Building a Culture of Patient Safety - Report of the Commission on Patient Safety and Quality Assurance.

<http://www.cpsqa.ie/publications/pdf/patientsafety.pdf>

Dept of Health (2001) Primary care- a new direction. Dublin: Stationery Office.

<http://www.ncnm.ie/files/publications/Primary%20care%20strategy.pdf>

Dept of Health (2006) A Vision for Change- Report of the Expert Group on Mental Health Policy http://www.dohc.ie/publications/vision_for_change.html

Dept of Health (2001) Quality and fairness- a health system for you. Dublin: Stationery Office http://www.dohc.ie/publications/quality_and_fairness.html

European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies: Country health system profiles <http://www.euro.who.int/en/home/projects/observatory/publications/health-system-profiles-hits/full-list-of-hits>

Forster T, Kentikelenis A & C Bambra. 2018. Health Inequalities in Europe: Setting the Stage for Progressive Policy Action. Dublin: TASC. <https://www.feps-europe.eu/attachments/publications/1845-6%20health%20inequalities%20inner-hr.pdf>

Harvey B (2007): Evolution of Health Services and Health Policy in Ireland. Dublin: Combat Poverty Agency
http://www.combatpoverty.ie/publications/EvolutionOfHealthServicesAndHealthPolicyInIreland_2007.pdf

HIQA. 2016. A guide to Health Technology Assessment at HIQA 2016
<https://www.hiqa.ie/sites/default/files/2017-01/A-Guide-to-Health-Technology-Assessment.pdf>

Houses of the Oireachtas Committee on the Future of Healthcare Sláintecare Report May 2017. <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/committees/32/future-of-healthcare/> and Implementation Strategy August 2018 <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/slaintecare-implementation-strategy/> and (see also TCD policy brief: https://www.tcd.ie/medicine/health_policy_management/assets/pdf/policy-brief-on-the-slaintecare-report-19122017.pdf)

HSE. 2013. E-health strategy for Ireland <https://www.ehealthireland.ie/Knowledge-Information-Plan/eHealth-Strategy-for-Ireland.pdf>

Levesque J, Harris M, Russell G. 2013. Patient-centred access to healthcare: conceptualising access at the interface of health systems and populations. *Int J Equity Health* 12:18. doi:10.1186/1475-9276-12-18

The TCD Resilience Project: (see publications at: https://www.tcd.ie/medicine/health_policy_management/research/current/health_systems_research/resilience/publications/,

WHO 2007. Everybody business: strengthening health systems to improve health outcomes: WHO's framework for action.
http://www.who.int/healthsystems/strategy/everybodys_business.pdf

Key websites

- Department of Health <http://health.gov.ie>
- Health Information and Quality Authority www.hiqa.ie
- Health Service Executive www.hse.ie
- WHO COVID-19 related resources: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

Assignments and Grading

Further details on the assignments will be distributed during lectures and discussed. Opportunities for questions about and clarification of all the assignments will be given during the course. Your grade for the course will be based on your work as follows:

Individual project:	20%:	10% peer-grade of presentation and information sheet 10% lecture-grade of presentation and information sheet
Weekly participation:	10%	Contribution to in-class discussion and debates
Essay:	30%	
Final Examination:	40%	

Individual project: Students will choose an area of healthcare policy and practice from within one of the Health Service Executive (HSE) Clinical Care Programmes (see <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/cspd/ncps/>), agreed with the lecturer by week 4. The presentation should last 20 minutes and will include: scope of the service, history, providers, access, coverage, safety, quality, effectiveness, efficiency, challenges/ barriers and any innovations in care, including those related to the COVID-19 impact and/or response. Presentations will be peer-assessed by the other class members and lecturer assessed. Students will also prepare an information sheet of no more than one A4 page for new international students outlining how and where care in that clinical area can be accessed.

Essay titles are distributed at the end of week three. The essay should be approximately 1,000 words long, excluding reference list. Essay requirements will be distributed with the titles.

For the **examination** you are required to answer three (essay-style) questions from a total of 10.

Plagiarism

It is every student's responsibility to read the Boston University statement on plagiarism, which is available in the Academic Conduct Code. Students are advised that the penalty against students on a Boston University program for cheating on examinations or for plagiarism may be "...expulsion from the program or the University or such other penalty as may be recommended by the Committee on Student Academic Conduct, subject to approval by the Dean."

Note: Students must retain an electronic copy of all work submitted for assessment.

Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Assessment
Week 1	<p>This lecture will provide the module introduction and overview for students, including the assessments. We will start to discuss the meaning of health in society, health policy and health systems, using the six building blocks of the WHO health system framework. This lecture will also give an overview of the historical development of the health system in Ireland, highlighting key social, cultural, religious and economic influences. We will also study the pandemic impact and response globally and in Ireland.</p> <p>Reading: Harvey B (2007): Evolution Of Health Services And Health Policy In Ireland. Dublin: Combat Poverty Agency http://www.combatpoverty.ie/publications/EvolutionOfHealthServicesAndHealthPolicyInIreland_2007.pdf WHO information on SARS-CoV-2 https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019</p>	Outline discussed.
Week 2	<p>Goals of health systems: In the lecture we will explore the key concerns (for access, coverage, quality and safety) and desired goals of health systems (including equity, health improvement, efficiency, responsiveness and risk protection). We will review how and why they are met (or not) within the Irish system and what changes are needed to improve the system.</p> <p>Reading: Levesque J, Harris M, Russell G. 2013. Patient-centred access to healthcare: conceptualising access at the interface of health systems and populations. <i>Int J Equity Health</i>; 12:18. doi:10.1186/1475-9276-12-18.</p>	
Week 3	<p>1. Service delivery 2. Governance The Irish health care system, linked with its historical development, is a complicated one, characterised by a two-tier structure of public and private care and unclear governance. The current structures of service delivery and governance will be described and critiqued, focused on groups' identified project areas of interest.</p> <p>Reading: Houses of the Oireachtas Committee on the Future of Healthcare Sláintecare Report May 2017. https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/committees/32/future-of-healthcare/ Slaintecare site: https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/slaintecare-implementation-strategy/</p>	<p>Essay titles distributed.</p> <p>Project work</p>
Week 4	<p>3. Financing The system of financing health care in Ireland is also complicated and we will discuss the ways money is raised for healthcare and spent within the healthcare system, and the effects of these strategies.</p>	Project work
Week 5	<p>4. Health workforce</p>	Project work

	Health systems rely on an effective and adequate workforce and most systems experience staff shortages and other challenges. We will analyse the health workforce challenges facing health systems in Ireland and internationally and how they are best met.	
Week 6	<p>5. Medical products, vaccines and technologies</p> <p>6. Health information and systems</p> <p>This lecture covers the challenging area of the costs and demands for medicines and related technologies. Public health vaccine programmes will also be covered. Finally the role of health information and systems for supporting better health care delivery will be debated.</p> <p>Reading: HIQA Guide to Health technology Assessment 2016 https://www.hiqa.ie/sites/default/files/2017-01/A-Guide-to-Health-Technology-Assessment.pdf E-health strategy for Ireland 2013 https://www.ehealthireland.ie/Knowledge-Information-Plan/eHealth-Strategy-for-Ireland.pdf</p>	Project work
	<i>Mid-semester break</i>	
Week 7	Student presentations	Presentations
Week 8	Essay advice session.	
Week 9	<p>The comparative perspective in health policy analysis is critical. In this lecture we will evaluate health reform strategies and their impacts, comparing across systems in order to better understand the Irish system.</p> <p>Reading: OECD 2010. Health Working Papers No. 51: Effective ways to realise policy reforms in health systems (Author Jeremy Hurst). http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/effective-ways-to-realise-policy-reforms-in-health-systems_5kmh377l4n9x-en Forster T, Kentikelenis A & C Bambra. 2018. Health Inequalities in Europe: Setting the Stage for Progressive Policy Action. Dublin: TASC https://www.feps-europe.eu/attachments/publications/1845-6%20health%20inequalities%20inner-hr.pdf</p>	
Week 10	<p>Synthesis session</p> <p>We will bring together and revise the key concerns and challenges for the healthcare system in Ireland using the WHO framework and building blocks.</p>	Essay submission
Week 11	<p>Revision session</p> <p>Revision of student-chosen topics. Individual essay feedback will be offered. Exam preparation starts.</p>	
Week 12	<p>Exam preparation</p> <p>Course reflection and evaluation will be undertaken. Exam preparation will continue, with a student-led focus.</p>	
	Exam	Exam