

Akkreditierungsagentur für Studiengänge  
im Bereich Gesundheit und Soziales  
Accreditation Agency in Health and Social Sciences



## **Assessment Report**

**for the Application of  
the University of Ha'il, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,  
College of Applied Medical Sciences,  
Department of Physical Therapy  
for the Accreditation of the Bachelor Program  
"Physical Therapy" (Bachelor of Science, B.Sc.)**

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**On-site visit**                                  December 4-5, 2017

Hail, Saudi Arabia

**Decision**    February 15, 2018

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<sup>1</sup> The expert listed in italics did not participate in the One-Site Visit.

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## 1 Introduction

The Accreditation Agency for Study Programs in Health and Social Sciences (AHPGS) is an interdisciplinary and multi-professional organization. Its mission is to evaluate Bachelor and Master's programs in the fields of health and social sciences, as well as in related domains, such as law or economics. By implementing accreditation and recommendation procedures, the AHPGS contributes to the improvement of the overall quality of teaching and learning. However, the higher education institutions remain responsible for fulfilling the quality assurance, too.

Since 2004 the AHPGS has been a member of the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA). In 2006, the AHPGS also joined the ENQA and became a member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) in 2009. Since 2012, the AHPGS has been a member of the Network of Central and Eastern European Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA). Starting from 2009, the AHPGS has been listed in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR).

In carrying out accreditation procedures, the AHPGS follows the requirements of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). In the present case, the decision regarding the accreditation of the study program is carried out by the AHPGS Accreditation Commission based on the following accreditation criteria<sup>2</sup>:

1. Program aims and learning outcomes
2. Curriculum design
3. Personnel
4. Facilities and learning resources
5. Study process and student assessment
6. Program and quality management
7. Gender equality and equal opportunities

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<sup>2</sup> Approved by the AHPGS Accreditation Commission

The external assessment procedure is carried out in four steps:

### **I. The University's application**

The AHPGS verifies the sufficiency of the documents submitted by the University, namely the self-evaluation report and its corresponding annexes. These are to fulfill the assessment spheres as well as the AHPGS standards. As a result, the AHPGS produces a summary (see Sections 2-5), which is to be approved by the University and subsequently made available for the expert group, together with all other documentation.

### **II. Written review**

The main documents are reviewed by the expert group assigned by the accreditation commission of AHPGS. This is done in order to verify the compliance of the study program with the applicable accreditation criteria valid in ... (country). Consequently, the experts comprise a short summary regarding the study programs.

### **III. On-site visit (peer-review)**

The experts carry out an external on-site visit at the University. During this visit discussions are held with members of the University, which include University and department administration, degree program management, teachers and students. This provides the expert group with details about the study program beyond the written documents. The task of the experts during the on-site visit is to verify and evaluate the objectives of the program and its projected study results, its structure, staff, material resources, course of studies and methods of assessment (selection of students, assessment of achievements, students' support), as well as of the program management (program administration, external assurance of study quality).

Following the on-site visit, the expert group issues the expert report. This report is based on the results of the visit, the written review of the study programs, and the documents submitted by the University. Finally, the report is made available to the University so that it can issue a response opinion.

The expert report as well as the University's response opinion – together with the provided documents – is submitted to the accreditation commission of the AHPGS.

#### **IV. The AHPGS accreditation decision**

The accreditation commission of the AHPGS examines the documentation made available in the process of application, namely the University's self-evaluation report, its annexes, the summary comprised by the AHPGS, the expert report, as well as the University's response opinion. These documents represent the basis for the commission's decision regarding the recommendation for accreditation of the study program. Consequently, this decision – together with all other documentation – is forwarded to the AHPGS Accreditation Commission for it to reach a decision regarding the accreditation of the study program.

## 2 Overview

### 2.1 Procedure-related documents

The University of Ha'il (UOH), also referred to hereinafter as "the University," delegated the task of accrediting its Bachelor study program "Physical Therapy" and "Nursing" to AHPGS.

The University's self-evaluation report for accreditation (without the awarding of the official seal of the Accreditation Council of the Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programs in Germany) of the above-mentioned study program (hereinafter referred to as the Self-Evaluation Report or SER) was submitted to the Accreditation Agency in Health and Social Sciences (AHPGS) in electronic format on March 14, 2017. The contract between the University and the AHPGS was signed on December 19, 2016.

On July 25, 2017, the AHPGS forwarded the open questions and explanatory notes (hereinafter OQ) pertaining to the Application for accreditation for the study programs to the University. On September 19, 2017, the University submitted the answers to the open questions and explanatory notes (hereinafter AOQ) to the AHPGS in electronic format.

The present document presents the summary of the AHPGS for the Bachelor study program "Physical Therapy." The first cohort for this program was admitted in the academic year 2011/2012.

The application documentation submitted by the University follows the outline recommended by the AHPGS. Along with the application request towards accreditation of the Bachelor study program "Physical Therapy" and "Nursing", the following additional documents can be found in the application package (the documents submitted by the University are numbered in the following order for easier referencing):

Specific documents for the Bachelor study program "Physical Therapy":

<b>Annex</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	B.Sc. Physical Therapy Program Study Plan
2	Module Descriptions
3	Study Program Curricula Vitae
4	Faculty Workload for Current Year

5	Teaching Matrix
6	Physiotherapy Internship Manual
7	Internship Evaluation

Alongside the study-program-specific documents, the following documents pertain to all study programs submitted to AHPGS for evaluation:

<b>Annex</b>	<b>Description</b>
A	Admission Rules
B	General University Mandatory (GUM) Course Descriptions
C	Short CVs Teaching Staff GUM Courses
D	Study & Examination Regulations
E	Memorandum of Agreement between University of Ha'il and Ministry of Health
F	University Quality Organization
G	Quality and Academic Accreditation - Terms and Abbreviations
H	Course Evaluation Questionnaire - Faculty Members
I	Student Evaluation Surveys
J	ISO9001:2015 - Certificate
K	Certificate of Accreditation granted by the Accreditation service for International Schools, Colleges and Universities (ASIC) to the University of Hail as a "Premier University".

The application, the open questions (OQ) and the answers to the open questions (AOQ), as well as these additional documents, together build the basis for the present summary. The layout bears no significance, as it solely reflects the agreed standard within the University.

## 2.2 Study program

### 2.2.1 Structural data

University	University of Ha'il
College	College of Applied Medical Sciences
Department	Department of Physical Therapy
Title of the study pro-	"Physical Therapy"



gram	
Degree awarded	Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.)
Cooperation partner	Saudi Arabia Ministry of Health: King Khaled Hospital, Ha'il; Ha'il General Hospital; Maternity and Children's Hospital, Ha'il; Mental Hospital, Ha'il; and Cardiac Center in Ha'il Region.
Language(s) of instruction	English, GUM Courses are taught in Arabic
Form of studies	Full-time, on-campus
Course offering timetable	Sunday to Thursday, 08:00-16:00
Period of education	8 semesters (4 years), plus 1 year of rotatory internships at hospitals
Total number of modules	59 (including Preparatory Year)
Credit Hours (CH) according to the Credit Hour system	152
Hours/CP	Theory modules: 1 contact hour (50 minutes) per week = 1 CP Clinical, lab and practical modules: 2 contact hours per week = 1 CP
Workload	<p><b>Total: 9,143 hours</b></p> <p>Theoretical modules: 1,680 hours (18%)  Practical modules: 930 hours (10%)  Clinical modules: 360 hours (4%)  Self-study: 4116 hours (45%)  Exams: 237 hours (3%)  Internship training: 1,820 hours (20%)</p>
Launch date of the study program	2009

First accreditation	Program has not yet been accredited
Number of available places in the program	80 students per year, with a maximum of 40 male students and 45 female students
Number of enrolled students to date	116 male + 122 female Total: 238
Number of graduates to date	70 male + 76 female Total: 147
Particular enrollment conditions for regular students	Saudi nationality; possession of a secondary education certificate or equivalent (not older than 5 years); good conduct; passing a general aptitude test and a scientific scholastic admission test; not currently studying at another university (unless resignation documents are provided); passing the Preparatory Year with a GPA of at least 2.8 on a 4.0 scale
Tuition fees	Tertiary education is free in Saudi Arabia for Saudi nationals. Students also receive monthly governmental stipends until they graduate.

Table 1: Structural data of the study program

### 2.2.2 Qualification objectives and employment opportunities

The program's objectives for scientific qualification include the preparation of professionals in physical therapy who are sensitive to the concept of comprehensive rehabilitation and who are prepared to cooperate with other healthcare professionals to adapt to society's changing healthcare needs. The University strives to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in physical therapy and comprehensive rehabilitation by means of scholarly inquiry and research.

More specific, the knowledge qualifications include recognition of human anatomy and physiology (including knowledge of the normal structures, functions and systems of the body), familiarity with the main developmental changes in humans, the recollection of basic theories and principles in various sciences (including physics, electrophysiology, electrotherapy, biomechanics and applied exercise sciences), the ability to describe the principles of movement and function analysis on the basis of anatomical, physiological and bio-

mechanical knowledge, the recognition of the effects of pharmacological intervention and its impact on therapy procedures, the understanding of the clinical consequences of pathology, the outlining of prevalent principles of physical therapy assessment and treatment (including the proper usage of orthotics and prosthetics), labeling the potential medical and surgical interventions for various body systems and tissues (as well as their relations to the physical therapy field), the identification of psychological and social factors which can influence health (especially under the umbrella of Islamic and Saudi Arabian legislation), the memorization of different theories of motor learning and control, the reproduction of principles of research- and evidenced-based practice of physical therapy and the adherence to ethics under Islamic legislation, medico-legal aspects of health problems, and in light of malpractice and common medical errors (SER 1.3.3).

The cognitive skills qualifications include the integration of clinical data into basic anatomical, physiological, biochemical and biomechanical knowledge with clinical data, the ability to conduct comprehensive examinations and evaluations before arriving at a diagnosis, the interpretation of a structured patient history (and the concise, accurate and understandable recording of patient issues), the reconstruction of a full physical examination of patients with acute and chronic conditions appropriate to the demographics of the patient (and maintaining Islamic and Arab cultural sensitivity), the development of a plan of care which sets quantifiable and realistic goals, decision-making skills regarding the proper use of orthotics and prosthetic devices, extraction of data from literature and application of same to patient's problems, application of scientific thinking in problem-solving (regarding patients, work management and rehabilitation), estimation of appropriate examination methods based on patient's problems and the valuation of the framework of quality assurance mechanisms and the legal standards within the practice of "Physical Therapy." (ibidem)

In terms of personality development, the study program aims for its students to become models of leadership, professionalism and lifelong learning. A second objective is the assumption of personal responsibility and accountability for professional growth as a learner, clinician and leader. Tertiary, graduates are to demonstrate self-reliance, integrity, creativity and perseverance in their attributes and values. The objective for students' development of social responsibility is expressed through the cultivation of knowledge, appreciation

and understanding of social, political and economic aspects of health. Students who graduate from the “Physical Therapy” program are expected to uphold the morality, legality and ethicalness of the profession, alongside their professional qualifications (SER 1.3.2).

According to the University (SER 1.4.1), graduates of the “Physical Therapy” program have job prospects in hospitals, nursing homes, residential homes, rehabilitation centers, private clinics, academic institutions, outpatient clinics, healthcare centers, fitness centers/health clubs, special schools and senior citizen centers.

The University also mentioned that only 30% of the necessary allied medical professionals in Saudi Arabia are thought to be Saudi nationals, and that the labor market will have a growing need for more Saudi medical experts in the future (SER 1.4.2).

### 2.2.3 Modularization and exam system

The program comprises 59 compulsory modules, out of which 12 modules are to be taken in a preparatory year (first two semesters) and 47 are to be taken in the subsequent six semesters. The fifth year is a yearlong internship training in clinical settings. There are no elective modules in the program. Students of “Physical Therapy” earn an average of 19 CP per semester.

The following study plan lists the required sequence of courses for the attainment of the degree Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) in “Physical Therapy”:

Semester	Course Nr.	Course Title	Total Workload Hours	CP
1 (Preparatory)	PENG001	Preparatory English I	132	3
	PENG002	Preparatory English II	132	3
	PBIO121	Preparatory Biology	150	3
	PCOS001	Preparatory Computer Skills	104	2
	PHYS121	Medical Physics	150	3
	IC101	Introduction to Islamic Culture	94	2
<b>Semester Total</b>			<b>762</b>	<b>16</b>

2 (Preparatory)	PENG003	Preparatory English III	132	3
	PENG008	Preparatory English IV	132	3
	PCHM121	Preparatory Medical Chemistry	150	3
	PMDC101	Medical Foundations	94	2
	PCSK001	Communication Skills	94	2
	ARAB101	Arabic Language	94	2
<b>Semester Total</b>			<b>696</b>	<b>15</b>
3	PHT229	Introduction to Physical Therapy	92	2
	ANA205	Human Anatomy I	140	3
	PHY208	Physiology I	140	3
	BCH205	Biochemistry	140	3
	PHT221	Therapeutic Exercises I	140	3
	PHT223	Tests & Measurements I	140	3
	PHT225	Electrotherapy I	140	3
<b>Semester Total</b>			<b>932</b>	<b>20</b>
4	ANA206	Human Anatomy II	140	3
	PHY209	Physiology II	140	3
	PHT222	Therapeutic Exercises II	140	3
	ARAB102	Arabic Writing	94	2
	PHT224	Tests & Measurements II	140	3
	PHT226	Electrotherapy II	140	3
	PHT227	Hydrotherapy	110	2
	IC102	Islam and Building the Society	94	2
<b>Semester Total</b>			<b>998</b>	<b>21</b>
5	PTH301	Pathology	82	2
	PHT311	Cardiopulmonary Disorders	82	2
	PHT312	Applied Exercise Physiology	140	3
	PHT331	Physiology of Cardiopulmonary Disorders	140	3
	PHT333	Geriatric Physiotherapy	92	2
	PHT328	Biomechanics	140	3
	PHT332	Clinical Training of Cardiopulmonary Disor-	170	3

		ders		
	IC103	Islamic Economic System	94	2
<b>Semester Total</b>			<b>940</b>	<b>20</b>
6	PSY303	Psychology	97	2
	PHT315	Orthopedics & Traumatology	102	2
	PHT341	Orthopedics Physiotherapy	137	3
	PHT304	Physical Therapy for Special Cases	137	3
	PHT342	Physiotherapy for Sports Injuries	122	2
	PHT343	Clinical Training of Orthopedics	225	4
	PHT381	Prosthetics & Orthotics	107	2
	RAD316	Radiographic Pathology	117	3
<b>Semester Total</b>			<b>1,044</b>	<b>21</b>
7	PHT416	Pediatrics	87	2
	PHT451	Pediatric Physiotherapy	140	3
	PHT452	Human Growth & Development	122	3
	PHT461	Physiotherapy of Obstetrics & Gynecology	100	2
	PHT453	Clinical Training Pediatric	170	3
	PHT483	Student Research Project	125	2
	BST211	Biostatistics	92	2
	IC104	Islamic Political System	94	2
<b>Semester Total</b>			<b>930</b>	<b>19</b>
8	PHT417	Neurology	92	2
	PHT471	Neurophysiotherapy	140	3
	PHT482	Administration in Physiotherapy	82	2
	PHRM401	Pharmacology	82	2
	PHT472	Clinical Training for Neurology	170	3
	PHT484	Student Seminars	125	2
	PHT418	Neurosurgery	92	2
	PHT478	Physical Therapy for Neurosurgery	140	3
<b>Semester Total</b>			<b>923</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Internship Training</b>			<b>1,820</b>	<b>0</b>

<b>Study Program Total</b>	<b>9,045</b>	<b>152</b>
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Table 2: Study Plan

The Module Descriptions (Annex 2) contain information on course titles and codes, the semesters in which the courses are offered, the number of CP, languages of instruction, intended learning outcomes, course contents and assessment methods.

The program consists of a Health Sciences' Preparatory Year, General University Mandatory Requirements, Basic Medical Sciences, Basic Physical Therapy Courses, Physical Therapy Practice and Professionalization and Research Issues.

According to the University's "Examination and Study Regulations" (Annex D), all newly admitted students are required to complete the preparatory year program before starting their undergraduate study.

The Health Sciences' Preparatory Year (31 credits) includes six modules pertaining to English language skills, Arabic language skills and communication skills, as well as basic sciences courses in biology, chemistry, medical physics and medical foundation. These modules reinforce skills and knowledge to provide a strong basis upon which to build the study of Physical Therapy. In this year, a course in computer skills and Islamic culture are also to be taken. The Health Sciences' Preparatory Year is studied together by students from the College of Medicine, the College of Nursing, the College of Pharmacy, the College of Dentistry, the College of Public Health and College of Informatics.

In the second year of the program, students narrow their focus to the realm of physical therapy. "Introduction to Physical Therapy" defines the role of physical therapy, its various specializations and its ethical contexts. "Human Anatomy I-II" broadens students' knowledge of the structures of the human body, and "Physiology I-II" widens their knowledge about the relationships and functions of these structures. Therapeutic sciences are discussed in "Therapeutic Exercises I-II," "Electrotherapy I-II" and "Hydrotherapy." Students learn methods for identifying physical problems and quantifying change in "Tests and Measurements I-II." "Biochemistry" delves into the study of the human metabolism and bodily chemical controls. Finally, "Arabic Writing" and "Islam and Building the Society" increase students' fluency in language and ideology within the Saudi Arabian society and culture. (Annexes 1-2)

In the third year of the program, students refine their knowledge relevant to physical therapy by examining specialized areas of medical study. "Pathology" introduces the study and analysis of disease, while "Cardiopulmonary Disorders" examines a narrower range of ailments. Students learn therapeutic solutions to these problems in various contexts in "Physiotherapy of Cardiopulmonary Disorders" and "Clinical Training of Cardiopulmonary Disorders." "Biomechanics" builds upon the foundation established earlier in the program by "Medical Physics" and examines the kinematics of the human body. "Applied Exercise Physiology" delves into the effects of various exercise training methods on different body systems. "Geriatric Physiotherapy" focuses on the disorders of the elderly and the effective treatment thereof. Students receive thorough training in orthopedics and orthotics in various contexts through the courses "Orthopedics and Traumatology," "Orthopedic Physiotherapy," "Clinical Training of Orthopedics" and "Prosthetics and Orthotics." The "Psychology" course is supposed to give students basic knowledge of memory, attention, perception, personality and social behavior. "Radiographic Pathology" enables students to make use of scanning technology to aid in diagnosing and correcting physical problems. "Physical Therapy for Special Cases" and "Physiotherapy for Sports Injuries" examine how the science of physical therapy is best applied to specific ailment types and how students can build solutions around the patient. Finally, in "Islamic Economic System," students increase their societal knowledge (Annexes 1-2).

In the fourth year of the program, students begin performing research. Students learn about treating the young, as well as the functions of aging, in "Pediatrics," "Pediatric Physiotherapy," "Clinical Training Pediatric" and "Human Growth and Development." Women's health is covered in "Physiotherapy of Obstetrics and Gynecology." "Biostatistics" applies statistical principles and techniques to biological analyses. "Neurology," "Neuro-Physiotherapy," "Neurosurgery," "Physical Therapy for Neurosurgery" and "Clinical Training for Neurology" build upon the psychological principles learned in the third year and closely examine matters of the brain and physically therapeutic techniques compatible with brain conditions or surgery. "Administration in Physiotherapy" helps to prepare students for their careers in the field, while "Pharmacology" examines the proper role of medication in physical therapy treatment. Students also carry out a research project and participate in seminars. Lastly,



“Islamic Political System” caps off students’ cultural education in the “Physical Therapy” program. (Annexes 1-2)

After completing the fourth year of the program, students fulfill the final requirement for the obtainment of the degree of “Bachelor of Science in Physical Therapy” by carrying out a year-long rotatory practical internship at (a) Saudi Arabian hospital(s). The internship is a full 52 weeks in length, with five days per week and seven hours per day. While mandatory, students receive no credit points for their carrying out of the internship year. (Annex 1; SER 1.1.5)

As the University of Ha’il does not operate its own hospital, the collaboration between the College of Applied Medical Sciences and external hospitals is organized through a Memorandum of Agreement between the University and the Ministry of Health (Annex E) in order to give “Physical Therapy” students the opportunity to receive practical training.

During the “Physical Therapy” program, students gain their practical experience in two ways. Firstly, the University conducts its practical modules in skills laboratories (18 modules) and in real clinical settings of partnered healthcare institutions (three modules) after students have learned the relevant theoretical concepts (AOQ 1). Secondly, students complete a year-long internship which serves as a check on the practical relevance of the study program and to expose students to the diversity of patients and maladies in need of physical therapy. The internship is supervised by a Clinical Instructor who is designated by the Department and who is responsible for observing students, giving them feedback and reporting on their performance. All interns and supervisors are guided by the policies and procedures contained in the Internship Training Manual (Annex 6). It incorporates clinical skills mandatory for physical therapists and how interns rotate through different settings within the sanctioned health care facility in order to train these skills. The University states that the knowledge gained both early in the curriculum (basic sciences) and in the more advanced years are used in the internship in the process of analysis, theorizing, information gathering, problem identification and choice of resolution. The quality assurance of the internship is said to be achieved through regular contact between the institutions and the University, including continuous assessments (Annex 7) and updates, and through strict internship regulations (SER 1.2.6).

Standard methods of didacticism and assessment (lectures, midterm exams, and finals) constitute the general framework of the study program, though the University states that the Department of Applied Medical Sciences emphasizes interactive, exploratory teaching techniques. Question-and-answer sessions are said to be common, and media-based lectures and role plays are also used pedagogically. Students are also assessed through practical demonstration of concept mastery, seminars, presentations, quizzes, homework assignments and practice reports (Annex 2; SER 1.2.4).

The University states that, in addition to its online administrative systems and multimedia equipment, it facilitates electronic learning through the “Blackboard system,” which hosts course content, allows for students to review lecture slides, submit assignments and perform similar tasks (SER 1.2.5).

The University claims that research has a central role in all of its study programs. Students take two research courses in their eighth semester, and those who distinguish themselves through outstanding research have the opportunity to win prizes and special opportunities to participate in national conferences (SER 1.2.7).

According to the University, each course’s intended learning objectives are used as skill-based evaluation methods in that course exams (and secondary assessment methods) measure students’ ability to fulfill them. Each course has one midterm exam and one final exam. Practical midterms are conducted in the sixth week of each semester; theoretical midterms, in the seventh; practical finals, in the 14<sup>th</sup>; and theoretical finals, in the 16<sup>th</sup>.

According to Article 5 of the University’s “Examination and Study Regulations” (Annex D), a student who obtains a failing grade in a required course must repeat the course. Under exceptional circumstances (at the discretion of the College Council), students may be granted allowance to retake an exam which they were not able to attend (OAOQ 2).

The University uses a Grade-Point Average (GPA) system with a 4.00 scale. 4.00 is a perfect grade, 1.00 is the minimum passing grade and 0.00 is a failing grade. Students’ grade in each course is multiplied by the number of CP of that course (weighted), these numbers are summed, and then divided by the total number of CP taken. This allows for students’ performance to be quantitatively evaluated over longer periods of time.

Students wishing to transfer to the University from an external higher education institution (HEI) are governed by the University's Examination and Study Regulations, Article 42-45 (Annex D). All transfer applications are submitted to the Admission & Academic Standing Committee and the college council which reviews the courses taken by the student outside the University based on the recommendations of the departments which offer equivalent courses. The courses evaluated as equivalent will be transferred to the student's record but will not be included in the calculation of his cumulative GPA.

The academic record of a student transferred from one college to another within the University of Ha'il includes all the courses he/she has studied together with the grades and the semester and cumulative GPA's obtained throughout his period of study at the University (ibidem, Article 47).

Ha'il University states that it grants students with special needs monetary allowances, special classrooms and teaching aids, based on the specific condition and needs of the individual in question. The Department Council considers such individual cases and sends its recommendations to the College Council, taking into account the degree of disability and the requirements of the "Physical Therapy" program. (SER 1.2.3)

#### **2.2.4 Admission requirements**

Admission policies and procedures along with the requirements are listed in the Admission Rules (Annex A) and Article 3 of the "Study & Examination Regulations" (Annex D) of the University of Ha'il. In order to be accepted to the study program, students must complete the admission process for UOH and the program's requirements, the most central of which is the possession of a Saudi Secondary School Certificate – Science Section (SSSCSS), or its equivalent, which is not more than five years old. Also required is an Aptitude Test Certificate (ATC) obtained from the Saudi National Center for Assessment in Higher Education. Finally, students who have been dismissed from another university for disciplinary reasons are barred from admission. Grades are used to assign priority in the event that there are more applicants than available places.

## 2.3 Study conditions and quality assurance

### 2.3.1 Human resources

According to the University, the workload in the “Physical Therapy” program is managed by one professor, six assistant/adjunct professors and 8 lecturers (Annex 11: Teaching Matrix), covering 159 of theoretical and practical teaching per week (AOQ 5). The University states that coordination of lectures and trainings between the male and female section may be carried out through video conferences, also in in the laboratories (AOQ 10).

The full teaching load of all regular academic staff members is ten hours for professors, 12 hours for associate professors (currently none employed in the program), 14 hours for assistant professors and 16 hours for lecturers and instructors.

Instructors and lecturers must hold a Master’s degree. Assistant/adjunct professors hold a Doctorate degree. To be appointed to the level of associate professor, a doctorate degree, four years’ experience in the faculty of a recognized university and a group of scientific research published in refereed journals is required. Being appointed to the level of a full professor requires a Doctorate degree and at least eight years’ experience in the faculty of a recognized university, including at least four years after promotion to the level of associate professor as well as scientific research published in refereed journals (OAOQ 7). The faculty’s qualifications in particular are documented in the CVs submitted by the University (Annex 2).

Considering the total of 116 male and 122 female students in the “Physical Therapy” program, this corresponds to a 15.87 student-to-faculty ratio (SER 2.1.1 and AOQ 7)).

According to the University (SER 2.1.3), faculty members at the College of Applied Medical Sciences are regularly invited to lectures, trainings, seminars, workshops and research colloquia on various levels (departmental, through the Vice Deanship, the Deanship of Quality and Development or other universities. Faculty members who attend local and international conferences, workshops, symposia and research fora have their registration fees, transportation and accommodation costs paid for by the University.

### **2.3.2 Facilities**

The Department of Physical Therapy is housed within the College of Applied Medical Sciences building and thus shares some common facilities with other departments. Eight classrooms (five in the male section, three in the female) are exclusively available for the teaching of Physical Therapy courses. These rooms are said to vary in size from 75 to 300 square meters (seating at least 30 students each) and to be equipped with internet-connected e-podiums, whiteboards, data shows, projectors and document cameras. (SER 2.3.1)

The male and female campuses at the University each contain a library, both of which contain books, journals, indices, videos, electronic media and software for professional use. The University states to also hold subscriptions to more than 300 databases and periodicals through the Saudi Digital Library (OAOQ 8). The library is open from 08:00 to 14:00 on Saudi weekdays.

The faculty members in the College of Applied Medical Sciences request new textbooks and reference materials on a department level. These requests are discussed in a Department Council, the decisions of which are then subject to approval by the College Council. The Deanship of Libraries then procures the materials.

The Deanship of Information Technology and E-Learning is responsible for ensuring that students have access to the technology they need.

### **2.3.3 Quality assurance**

The University of Ha'il has established a quality assurance hierarchy (Annex F) which chains from the University Rector to the Vice Rector of Quality and Community Services and the Deanship of Quality and Development. Below this on the same tier are the Strategic Planning Administration, the Skills Development Administration and the Quality and Accreditation Administration, the latter of which further contains a Quality Assistant Unit, an Academic Accreditation Unit, an Intended Learning Outcomes Assessment Unit and an ISO Unit. The University of Ha'il went through a certification process for ISO 9001:2015 at the German TÜV SÜD and obtained its certificate for three years (2017-2020) (Annex J). Furthermore, the University of Ha'il was accredited by the English Accreditation Service for International Schools, Colleges and Universities (ASIC) and was granted the status of a "Premier Universi-

ty” for a four-year accreditation period from March 2017 to March 2021 (Annex K).

The University has created a Vice Deanship of Quality and Development which is empowered and charged with the following tasks:

- Establishing units within the College of Applied Medical Sciences involving members from the male, female and satellite campuses
- Coordinating with these units to address all concerns related to quality assurance in clinical, academic, research and management contexts
- Periodically updating, evaluating and enhancing modules under the guidance of Heads of Departments and Quality Coordinators in each department, in order to ensure that the objectives of each module align with those of the “Physical Therapy” program and the University
- Implementing various quality assessment mechanisms, viz.
  - Course specifications
  - Course reports
  - Internal and external auditing of course specifications, course reports and course files
  - Surveys of students, alumni, faculty and non-teaching personnel
  - External auditor feedback
  - Program specification and report

The overall feedback from the Vice Deanship of Quality and Development guides the individual departments to formulate action plans and module enhancement. The Vice Deanship of Quality and Development has as its central aims the short-, medium- and long-term goals and plans of the University.

At the end of each academic year, the Course Coordinator integrates all information regarding potential improvement of the courses in the “Physical Therapy” program, gathered from course reports submitted by instructors and students (Annexes H and I). With a goal of enhancing course objectives, content, teaching strategies and assessment methods, the Course Coordinator leads meetings with all instructors and forwards the recommended course improvements to the Heads of Department.

The questionnaires for students’ evaluation do not cover the evaluation of the students’ workload.

The “Banner system,” provided by the Deanship of Admission and Registration, is said to provide students with details about their studies, including academic requirements, number of credit points earned and left to earn, the complete academic plan, their attendance records, their grades and their cumulative GPA. Administrative tasks, such as adding or dropping courses and managing schedules, can also be performed by students through “Banner.”

To evaluate the practical relevance of the “Physical Therapy” program, the University claims to request periodic feedback from graduated students, professional and regulatory institutions, and various hospitals and healthcare centers. The Department Council discusses the results and, if necessary, makes changes to the annual improvement plans.

In order to guide all quality activities at the University, the University’s Quality and Accreditation Administration published several manuals, primarily in Arabic language (OAOQ 4). In order to simplify all operations concerning quality for non-Arabic speaking staff of the university, a handbook was translated clearing the concepts and definitions in quality assurance at Ha’il University (Annex G).

“Physical Therapy” students are assigned an academic advisor, a faculty member responsible for helping students familiarize with the University’s services, policies and curriculum, as well as for solving any issues affecting the pedagogical experience. The department holds meetings each semester where students and faculty are invited to exchange views and opinions about curricular, extracurricular and career issues.

The University claims to follow the regulations set by Saudi Arabia’s Ministry of Social Welfare regarding support for students with disabilities and chronic illnesses (OAOQ 6).

## **2.4 Information about the University**

The University of Ha’il was founded in 2005, having originally opened its doors in 1988 as the Ha’il Community College. It currently has an enrollment of roughly 40,000 students across 43 study programs (thereof 39 Bachelor programs) and the following 15 Colleges:

- College of Applied Medical Sciences,
- College of Arts and Sciences,

- College of Business Administration,
- College of Community,
- College of Computer Science and Engineering,
- College of Dentistry,
- College of Education,
- College of Engineering,
- College of Medicine,
- College of Nursing,
- College of Pharmacy,
- College of Preparatory Year,
- College of Public Health,
- College of Sciences,
- College of Shariah Law.

The College of Applied Medical Sciences was established in 2008 and offers the Bachelor programs "Physical Therapy," "Clinical Nutrition," "Diagnostic Radiology" and "Clinical Laboratory Sciences." In the future, it plans to also offer the Bachelor programs "Optometry and Vision Sciences" and "Hearing and Speech Sciences."

The Department of Physical Therapy was founded in the year 2009 in response to a growing need for physical therapists; the University states that it observed a marked increase in musculoskeletal injuries and other ailments due to the increasing prevalence of sedentary lifestyles.



### **3 Expert Report**

#### **3.1 Preliminary remarks**

The Accreditation Agency in Health and Social Sciences (hereupon, the AHPGS) was commissioned by the decision of University of Ha'il/Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (hereupon, the University) for the accreditation of the study programs "Physical Therapy" (Bachelor of Science) and "Nursing" (Bachelor of Science).

The on-site visit evaluation of the study program "Physical Therapy", as well as of the study program "Nursing", offered at the University of Ha'il, was carried out on December 4-5, 2017, at the University of Ha'il/Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The documents of the University, the feedback from the experts to the documents and the results of the discussions with the representatives of the University during the on-site visit serve as bases for the statements made in the expert report.

The following experts were appointed by the accreditation commission of the AHPGS for the evaluation of the study program:

#### **As representatives of higher education institutions:**

##### **Prof. Dr. Christian Grüneberg**

University of Applied Sciences for Health Care Professions, Bochum,  
Germany  
Professor of Physical Therapy

##### **Prof. Dr. Steve Strupeit**

University of Education Schwäbisch Gmünd, Germany  
Professor of Nursing Sciences

##### **Prof. Dr. Birgit Vosseler**

University of Applied Sciences St. Gallen, Switzerland  
Professor of Nursing Sciences

##### **Prof. Dr. Mieke Wasner**

SRH University of Applied Sciences, Heidelberg, Germany  
Professor of Physiotherapy

**As student representative:*****Franziska Jagoda***<sup>3</sup>

*Nursing Studies at University of Witten/Herdecke, Germany  
Bachelor Degree in Nursing*

The on-site visit of the experts is carried out in accordance with the *Rules for the Accreditation of Study Programs and for System Accreditation* (determined by the decision of the Accreditation Commission, of December 8, 2009 in the version of February 20, 2013, Drs. AR 20/2013) as well as the *Criteria for the assessment and accreditation procedures of study programs at foreign higher education institutions* developed by the AHPGS. After the announcement of the accreditation decision, the expert report will be published as a part of the final Assessment Report.

**3.2 Basic information about the study program**

The main objective of the bachelor study program "Physical Therapy" offered at the College of Applied Medical Sciences of the University of Ha'il is to prepare professionals in Physical Therapy who are sensitive to the concept of comprehensive rehabilitation through skills and techniques of therapeutic exercises as well as through working and collaborating with other health professionals in order to meet the changing health needs of society. The bachelor study program "Physical Therapy" is a full-time study program with a regular duration of four years (eight semesters) plus one year of rotary internships. The program curriculum consists of 59 courses, of which 12 are to be taken in a preparatory year. There are no elective courses in the program. The study program requires the obtainment of 152 credit hours (CH) according to the international credit hour system. One credit hour is equal to one contact hour of lectures or two hours of laboratory or clinical training hours per week. The total workload of the program constitutes 9,143 hours, of which 1,680 hours relate to theoretical modules, 930 are practical laboratory hours, 360 are clinical practice hours, 237 are estimated for the final examination and 4,116 are hours of independent study. An additional 1,820 hours have to be covered in a non-credit-bearing one-year internship training.

Admission requirements of the program include the possession of a Saudi Secondary School Certificate (Science Section) or its equivalent, and passing

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<sup>3</sup> The expert shown in italics did not participate in the on-site visit of the University.

the General Aptitude Test as well as the Scholastic Achievement Admission Test for scientific tracks, obtained from the Saudi National Center for Assessment in Higher Education. Upon completion of the study program, students are awarded with the academic title "Bachelor of Science in Physical Therapy". There are 80 study places annually available in the program, with a maximum of 40 male students and 45 female students. Admission takes place every September. The first batch of students was admitted to the program in the academic year 2009/2010. Up to now, 146 students (70 male and 76 female) have graduated from the program. The main language of instruction is English. No tuition fees are charged to Saudi nationals. Students also receive monthly governmental stipends until they graduate.

### **3.3 Expert Report**

The on-site visit was carried out on December 4 and 5, 2017, according to the previously agreed-upon schedule. Representatives from the head office of the AHPGS accompanied the expert group.

The expert group met on December 3, 2017, for preliminary talks prior to the on-site visit. They discussed the submitted application documents and the results of the written evaluation as well as the uprising questions. Furthermore, they prepared the plan of the on-site visit at the University.

In the course of the on-site visit, experts conducted discussions with the University management, the Deanship of Quality and Development, representatives of the College of Applied Medical Sciences and the College of Nursing and the Chair, Vice Chair and the male and female teaching staff of the programs "Physical Therapy" and "Nursing" as well as with male and female students currently studying in the programs. Furthermore, they inspected the learning premises, such as lecture halls, seminar classrooms, library, and computer classes on the male and female campuses. Additionally, the experts had the opportunity to see the equipment and the capacity of the laboratories at the male and at the female campus.

In the course of the on-site visit, the University submitted the following additional documents upon the requirement of the experts:

- "Quality and Academic Accreditation – Terms and Abbreviations"
- "Key Performance Indicators of the University of Ha'il – Definition, Patterns, Importance"

This expert report is structured in compliance with the accreditation criteria of the AHPGS approved by the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS on September 30, 2015 in the version of July 21, 2015. The study program will be described and analyzed in a comprehensive manner below. The documents submitted by the University, the experts' feedback to the documents, the observations made during the on-site visit, results of discussions with the representatives of the University, the Colleges and the Departments serve as the basis for the statements made in the expert report.

### **3.3.1 Program aims and their implementation**

The Bachelor study program "Physical Therapy" pursues specific qualification objectives. The program aims at preparing individuals who fulfill their professional obligation to contribute to the health needs of society through education, scholarly activities, service and professional practice and who play an effective role in working with a medical team as part of an integrated program of health and medical care. Besides educating the students to become service-oriented, collaborative, scientifically reflective practitioners, the graduates are supposed to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in physical therapy and rehabilitation through scholarly inquiry and research for assuming responsibilities in the areas of patient care, administration and education. Moreover, students are qualified to render evidence-based, independent judgements concerning patient needs by virtue of critical thinking, commitment to lifelong learning, and ethical values.

Thus, the experts conclude that these objectives cover professional, extraprofessional and interdisciplinary aspects and specifically refer to the domain of academic competences, necessary employment qualifications, skills of social commitment and personal development. The learning outcomes of the study program are well-defined and correspond to the pursued academic degree.

The University's impressive effort to contribute to the advancement of physical therapy and health care in Saudi Arabia in particular is also shown through the offered bridging courses for physical therapists with a lower non-academic qualification in order to upgrade their degree to an academic level. Although being a temporary offer until all interested lower qualified physical therapists have upgraded their qualification to the Bachelor level, the experts consider the bridging courses as an important issue in the development of the profes-

sion that fits to the University's strategy on the one hand and to the needs of society and health care on the other hand.

The experts also appreciate the department's aim to implement higher qualifications of physical therapy in hospital settings.

Overall, the study program has been developed and is currently being implemented according to the national legal requirements. Nevertheless, the program representatives are well aware of international standards in academic physical therapy education. In order to improve the correspondence with international standards, the experts recommend relating and defining the qualification framework according to the World Confederation of Physical Therapy (WCPT).

Although results of graduates' surveys were not presented, the University outlined clearly the society's need for the profession. As the rapid developments in Saudi Arabia also influence the national health sector and cause a high number of job vacancies which are supposed to be covered with Saudi nationals for fostering the national job market, graduates from the "Physical Therapy" Bachelor program are most likely to be employed as Physical Therapists in public and private hospitals and rehabilitation institutions or to start their own practice after completing the licensing procedures with the professional bodies in the kingdom.

From the experts' point of view, the requirements of the criterion are fulfilled.

### **3.3.2 Structure of the study program**

The Bachelor study program "Physical Therapy" is a full-time study program with a regular duration of four years (eight semesters) plus one year of rotary internships. The program curriculum consists of 59 courses, of which 12 are to be taken in a preparatory year. To the experts this appears as a very detailed curriculum, consisting of a large number of more or less isolated courses. A modular structure is not yet fully implemented. However, the combination and sequence of the courses of the study program are consistent with the earlier described specified qualification objectives. On site, the program representatives explain that a more comprehensive curriculum design with a more modular idea is envisaged in the further development of the program, respectively in an advanced new "Doctor in Physical Therapy" (DPT) program at the College. The experts acknowledge and support the consideration of modern

curriculum design in the further development of the University's "Physical Therapy" programs.

The study program requires the obtainment of 152 credit hours (CH) according to the international credit hour system. One credit hour is equal to one contact hour of lectures or two hours of laboratory or clinical training hours per week. The total workload of the program constitutes 9,143 hours, of which 1,680 hours relate to theoretical modules, 930 are practical laboratory hours, 360 are clinical practice hours, 237 are estimated for the final examination and 4,116 are hours of independent study. Additional 1,820 hours have to be covered in a non-credit-bearing one-year internship training.

The program consists of a Health Sciences' Preparatory Year, General University Mandatory Requirements, Basic Medical Sciences, Basic Physical Therapy Courses, Physical Therapy Practice and Professionalization and Research Issues.

The Health Sciences' Preparatory Year contains English language skills, Arabic language skills and communication skills, as well as basic sciences courses in biology, chemistry, medical physics and medical foundation in order to reinforce skills and knowledge to provide a strong basis upon which to build the study of Physical Therapy. A course in computer skills and Islamic culture are also to be taken. The Health Sciences' Preparatory Year is studied together by students from the College of Medicine, the College of Nursing, the College of Pharmacy, the College of Dentistry, the College of Public Health and College of Informatics.

Being admitted to the Department of Physical Therapy (see Criterion 3), students start accumulating more program-specific knowledge through the resting four years of study.

Thus, the experts conclude that students are provided with specialized and program-specific knowledge on the one hand, and interdisciplinary knowledge as well as professional, methodological and general competence on the other hand. The experts recommend implementing research skills earlier in the course of studies to support the development of a scholarly attitude in the students.

Furthermore, the experts acknowledge the very detailed course files with its contents and aims. This allows a high level of transparency and facilitates the

implementation of equal standards in the male and the female tracks of the study program. Moreover, it was shown that the staff incorporates current issues and developments to their teaching.

However, the experts determine that the curriculum leaves room for improvement in terms of communication skills. Taking into account an increasingly complex and differentiated clientele, patients with increasing chronic and non-communicable diseases and therewith behavioral changes, appropriately interacting with this patients/clients clientele is a professional challenge. Thus, addressing behavioral changes, counseling and communication during the studies would be an asset.

Further enhancement from the experts' point of view could be reached including and/or emphasizing the topics prevention and health promotion through physical therapy in the curriculum.

As the teaching staff explained during the on-site visit, the curriculum already contains approaches to interprofessional education (IPE) in the health care sector. But currently, the focus on teambuilding and IPE lies in the internship year and is supposed to be intensified as soon as the own University hospital is ready to operate. As the College of Applied Medical Sciences and the University of Ha'il in general dispose of very good preconditions for IPE, and as IPE becomes a more and more significant issue in health care, the experts strongly encourage the University to strengthen IPE training in the curricula.

Professional practical skills are gained through the practical hours related to the respective theoretical courses, and clinical rotations at the hospital. Additionally, the majority of courses are often completed with a practical exam part. As a whole, the students spend 930 practical contact hours in the laboratories/skills labs at the University. Additionally, during the four years of study, students spend 360 hours in real clinical settings. The finalizing internship year in the fifth year comprises another 1,820 hours of clinical practice in hospitals. Overall, the experts appreciate the impressively high total number of clinical practice hours of 2,180. However, these hours appear very unevenly distributed as only 360 hours are spent in clinical settings during the first four years of study while the majority of hours are completed within the last internship year. Although comprising a high workload, the final internship year is not credit-bearing as it is not formally part of the studies but rather of the legal recognition/licensing process for physical therapy according to the Saudi

Arabian health system. On site, the program representatives outline new possibilities of more flexible inclusion of clinical practice into the study programs as soon as the University's planned own hospital is ready to operate.

Apart from disposing of excellently equipped skills labs (see Criterion 5), the University has signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Health in order to realize the clinical internships at suitable Saudi Arabian hospitals. Expectations on students' qualification and the structure of the internships are clearly defined in the "Manual for Physical Therapy Internship Program". The experts also appreciate that supervisors from both the University's side and the clinical setting are assigned to supervise students during their internship.

Standard methods of didacticism and assessment (lectures, midterm exams, and practical as well as written finals) constitute the general framework of the study program, though the University states that the Department of Physical Therapy emphasizes interactive, exploratory teaching techniques. Nevertheless, the experts would like to strengthen the idea of a student-centered study program, encouraging students to take an even more active role in creating their own education process and developing a scholarly attitude. The experts already acclaim the activity of the "Physical Therapy Club", a student initiative which supports student activities (e.g. poster presentations and participation at program-related conferences etc.) and public relations work for the study program. Thereby and as a consequence of an appropriate student-teacher ratio, students receive the support and guidance they need for the organization and accomplishment of assignments and the learning process in general.

The study program has a course-related examination system. Its implementation, including the grading system, course load regulations, repetition of courses and exams, assignments of academic status (good standing, academic warning, academic probation) and transfer of credits, is regulated in the University's "Undergraduate Study and Examination Regulation & the UoH Rules for their Implementation".

From the experts' point of view, the requirements of the criterion are fulfilled.

### **3.3.3 Admission and Feasibility**

Admission policies and procedures along with the requirements are listed in the University's "Undergraduate Study and Examination Regulation & the UoH



Rules for their Implementation". In order to be admitted to the Bachelor study program "Physical Therapy" at the University of Ha'il, students must have the secondary school certificate or its equivalent from inside or outside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In addition to a record of good conduct, an Aptitude Test Certificate (ATC) obtained from the Saudi National Center for Assessment in Higher Education is also required. All newly admitted students are required to complete the preparatory year program before starting their undergraduate studies. To be placed to the „Physical Therapy“ study program, students must pass the Preparatory Year with a Grade Point Average (GPA) of at least 2.8 on a 4.0 scale.

As the Preparatory Year comprises medical foundations as well as foundations in medical biology, chemistry and physics in order to compensate deficiencies from secondary school, the experts determine an appropriate admission procedure and requirements that correspond to the standards of the study program.

The admission requirements are properly documented and made publicly available.

The experts determine a relatively high amount of exams to be passed during the „Physical Therapy“ study program as each of the 59 courses require passing a midterm and a final exam, often comprising a practical and a theoretical part. To compensate, the University observes the students' performance by collecting and generating the cumulative and semester Grade Point Average (GPA). Students with a GPA less than 2.00 out of 4.00 receive an academic warning. Students with a GPA less than 1.00 out of 4.00 are put under academic probation. To facilitate the amount of exams, the type as well as the time of the different examinations is defined and communicated to the students transparently and at the beginning of the course. The experts confirm that the University takes measures to guarantee the feasibility of the study program. The amount of student workload is appropriate. As a whole, the organization of the education process ensures the successful implementation of the study program.

From the experts' point of view, the requirements of the criterion are fulfilled.

### 3.3.4 Examination system and transparency

The University uses a continuous assessment process to ensure the quality of education for its students. This is achieved by evaluating the performance of the student through a series of exams and tests that are scheduled during the academic semester. The experts appreciate the implementation of an “exit exam” after the fourth year of studies in order to be admitted to the internship year. Students in the “Physical Therapy” program are not required to write a bachelor thesis but have to submit a written proposal that is comparable to small empirical studies or systematic reviews and shows an appropriate level of academic qualification. In order to equalize with international standards, the experts recommend extending this written proposal to a proper bachelor thesis in order to conclusively prove academic competences.

In the experts’ opinion, the study program requires a very high amount of exams which causes a high workload not only for students but also for the teaching staff (see also Criterion 3). Discussing the issue on site, staff as well as students are apparently satisfied with the exam procedures and see clear benefits in the current practice. The transparent information of examination methods and of the examination schedule at the beginning of each term makes the great number of assessments during and at the end of each semester manageable.

Thus, the experts conclude that the examinations, although numerous, serve to determine whether the envisaged qualification objectives have been achieved or not. These examinations are focused on students’ knowledge. To compensate the high workload through the great amount of exams, the experts recommend implementing a greater variety and flexibility in examination methods and focusing stronger on a competence-oriented examination design. In addition and referring to international standards, the experts recommend the implementation of bachelor thesis in order to foster the academic level of the study program.

The study program has a system of assessment, conversion and recognition of students’ competences and credits acquired and completed at other higher education institutions documented in the University’s “Undergraduate Study and Examination Regulation & the UoH Rules for their Implementation”. The bridging program enables upgrading their former professional achievements in physical therapy to upgrade their qualification to an academic level.

The requirements to students' performance in examinations are regulated and published. The frequency of examinations, as well as their organization, is appropriate.

The University's "Undergraduate Study and Examination Regulation & the UoH Rules for their Implementation" contain regulations in compensation measures for students with disabilities and/or chronic illnesses.

From the experts' point of view, the requirements of the criterion are fulfilled.

### **3.3.5 Teaching staff and material equipment**

Overall, the teaching and academic staff of the Department of Physical Therapy shows a very high level of commitment and potential for the execution as well as further development of the study program they are responsible for. The expert group comes to the conclusion that there is a strong corporate identity and positive group dynamics among the university and faculty administrations.

The teaching staff of the program "Physical Therapy" comprises in total 15 teaching members, one professor, six assistant professors and eight lecturers. The University points out that the teaching staff is constantly amended in accordance with the department's needs but depending on the availability of sufficiently qualified professionals.

The experts appreciate the University's efforts and its success in establishing a complete, appropriately qualified and sustainable teaching body, despite the modest lack of specialists in the country. As a consequence, the department benefits now from a highly engaged international faculty, commanding an appropriate level of English for teaching.

However, the experts see room for enhancement by complementing the teaching staff with a professional in neurological rehabilitation in order to guarantee the professional quality in the neurological topics scheduled for the eighth semester of the program.

Regarding the employment process, the qualification and experience of the teaching staff is closely evaluated prior to the appointment decision. The experts have admitted that the instructors involved in study programs reveal a high level of competency in the relevant field.

New teaching staff is thoroughly briefed about the program and their teaching responsibilities before they can start working.

Students evaluate performance of all teaching and other staff periodically.

The experts find the amount of human resources allocated to the program to be sufficient to carry out its functions. The teaching staff within the Bachelor program "Physical Therapy" is in possession of academic and technical credentials and experience adequate to their jobs. The University informs its employees about opportunities for personal and professional development in clear ways, and actively encourages their participation in workshops, training courses, and conferences intended to further their ability which is confirmed during the talks with the staff on site.

On site, the experts were shown around the University's and the Faculty's premises at the female and at the male campus. The experts were impressed with the quality of the laboratories and clinical areas used to train students in the Bachelor program "Physical Therapy." The skills labs are equipped with all relevant high technology devices, especially for the assessment of human motion and body performance. Implementing also areas for exercising (medical) training for muscle performance and cardio training as important issues in physical therapy should be considered. The experts were also shown around of the newly developed College of Applied Medical Sciences which is under construction on the male campus. It was ascertained by the experts that the Bachelor study program "Physical Therapy" has ample available teaching facilities at its disposal. The laboratory infrastructure and the equipment are suitable to guarantee a high level of teaching and research.

However, the experts determined that, although disposing the same well-equipped skills labs as the male campus, the premises at the female campus were characterized by spatial scarcity and a slim infrastructure in comparison with the vastness of the male campus, although the female track admits even more students than the male track. The experts acknowledge that the University is still in a phase of development and that the development plans incorporate amplification plans for the female campus, too. Nevertheless, the experts would like to underline the evidence and necessity to guarantee the same standards and quality in equipment and facilities for male and female students, once the University reaches the phase of full operation.

The University hosts a library at each of the two campuses, the male and the female one. The libraries offer ample print and internet resources for academic research. Besides, every department hosts another small program-specific library with the most central reference books. From the experts' point of view, the learning resource materials and associated services are consistent with the requirements of the program and the courses offered by it. Even so, also in this regard it has to be mentioned that the libraries as much as the self-study premises at the female campus show spatial scarcity and a very basic level of quality in equipment and infrastructure; an issue that should be cleared up with the further development of the University.

Overall, the experts conclude that the requirements of the criterion are fulfilled.

### **3.3.6 Quality assurance**

From the experts' point of view, the University of Ha'il has a well-structured system of quality assurance spread across all of its units. The University of Ha'il has established a quality assurance hierarchy which chains from the University Rector to the Vice Rector of Quality and Community Services to the Deanship of Quality and Development. At each department of the University, a Quality Assurance Unit has been established. Quality assurance rooms are prepared in each department, in which all relevant documents are kept readily accessible for the responsible staff members. On site, the experts had the opportunity to visit the Quality Assurance Unit's room and accessed all documents, such as meeting minutes, questionnaires, internship reports and evaluations, admission procedure and entrance exam documents etc.

Moreover, every college disposes of a student council in order to involve students in the processes. Twice annually, the Deanship of Quality and Development visits each college.

On site, the experts got a detailed introduction into the work of the Deanship of Quality and Development which guides the University's colleges and departments closely through quality measuring processes. For this reason, the Deanship of Quality and Development elaborated a large variety of manuals which offer a systematic way of informing staff and students about procedures and key performance indicators. The experts highlight especially the defined process for implementing new study programs.

The Deanship of Quality and Development carries out internal and external quality assurance procedures on a cyclical basis, among them among them course evaluations and student and teaching staff surveys. At the end of each semester, a course report is written and course specifications may be amended according to the evaluation results.

Students' workload is assessed and regulated through the Grade Point Average (GPA). Students with a GPA less than 2.00 out of 4.00 have to reduce their workload until they are able to improve their performance again.

The University reports that, in 2017, the University was granted the MENA (Middle East & North Africa) Award for the best internal quality management system in the Middle East.

The experts conclude that the University has a well-established, documented and published concept of quality assurance in education process, teaching and research, which serves as the basis for the quality-oriented development and implementation of the study program.

The results of the internal quality assurance management are applied for the continuous development of the study program. In doing so, the University takes into close consideration the quality evaluation results as well as the analyses of students' workload, their academic accomplishments and feedback from graduates.

Nevertheless, the experts determine that the quality management system is strongly concentrated on quantitative surveys. Little has been reported regarding definite measures and actions for quality enhancement derived from the evaluations. As a consequence, the experts strongly recommend implementing and strengthening also qualitative dimensions and evaluations, e.g. group discussions or so-called "Round Tables".

This would as well allow more student participation. The experts acknowledge that the University already implemented first arrangements for student participation, such as student councils in every college and the student clubs in every department. However, students on site did not seem to be very aware of possibilities to influence and take part in development and decision processes at the University. As the experts consider students' personal development and civic commitment an essential part of academic education, the Uni-

versity should expand the promotion of student participation and encourage students to take more action in the creative processes at the University.

From the experts' point of view, the requirements of the criterion are fulfilled.

### **3.3.7 Gender equality and equal opportunities**

The Department of Physical Therapy has both female and male students and assures that it provides equal admission, education, examination and participation opportunities for both groups of students. The University of Ha'il demonstrates its commitment to the provision of equal opportunities for all students, within the cultural boundaries of the local society, and shows impressive openness for diversity and social developments.

The experts acknowledge that female as much as male staff and students have been and are participating in national and international conferences.

However, as mentioned in Criterion 5, the quality of facilities and the availability of space still show differences between the male and the female campus which should be eliminated along with the further development of the University's implementation. During the on-site visit, the experts have also gained the impression that the communication and exchange of information between the male and the female campus could be improved. The expert group encourages the University to use the full potential of communication possibilities between the male and the female campuses of the University and, that way, promote the exchange of experiences and ideas for the further development of the study program.

To enable every young Saudi with a secondary school certificate to attend higher education, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia grants full scholarships to all male and female students. Additionally, the female campus disposes of a nursery for the female students' and staff's children.

Moreover, the experts appreciate the possibility to attend a bridging program for lower qualified professionals in order to upgrade their degree to an academic level and, thus, the University's contribution to ease lifelong learning.

Taking into account the societal norms and cultural context of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the expert group concludes that the requirements of the criterion are met.

### 3.4 Summary

The overall impression of the University is very positive. The University of Ha'il presents itself convincingly as an open-minded and dynamic institution, within the cultural boundaries of the local society, with willingness to import new ideas and recommendations for further enhancement. The experts find that the University strongly benefits from its dedicated, involved and interested Rector who is aware of challenges but keen on pushing forward the University's development and enhancement.

The experts positively emphasize the facts that a new building of the College of Applied Sciences is currently under construction and that the University is planning to build its own hospital in the near future.

A number of additional favorable characteristics and achievements of the study program were demonstrated by the management of the University, the representatives of the college, those of the department as well as of the student body, such as a high amount of practical training hours, an excellent infrastructure (for now especially at the male campus), a multi-disciplinary and multi-national teaching team, a very thorough and comprehensive curriculum, and a strong commitment to quality assurance. The objectives of the study program meet the requirements of the current job market of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Based on the information from written documents and the results of the on-site visit, the experts came to the conclusion that the study program "Physical Therapy" offered at the University of Ha'il fulfills the above described criteria. Hence, the experts decided to submit a recommendation to the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS for a positive decision regarding the accreditation of the study program.

For the continuous development of the study program, the experts have outlined the following recommendations:

- The qualification framework should also be related and defined according to the World Confederation of Physical Therapy (WCPT).
- Research skills should be introduced earlier in the course of studies and a bachelor thesis as a final prove of academic competences should be implemented.



- Behavioral changes, counseling and communication in the context of physiotherapeutic treatment should be addressed.
- Prevention and health promotion through physical therapy should be included or emphasized in the curriculum.
- IPE training should be expanded.
- Clinical training hours should be distributed more evenly over the years of study.
- The idea of a student-centered study program, encouraging students to take an even more active role in creating their own education process and developing a scholarly attitude, should be developed and implemented.
- A greater variety and flexibility in examination methods as well as a competence-oriented examination design should be implemented.
- The teaching staff should be complemented with a professional in neurological rehabilitation.
- More qualitative dimensions and evaluations should be applied.
- Student participation at the University should be expanded.
- Differences between the male and the female campus should be eliminated and the same standards and quality in equipment and facilities for male and female students should be assured along with the further development of the University's implementation.
- The full potential of communication possibilities between the male and the female campuses of the University and the possibilities of exchange of experiences and ideas for the further development of the study program should be used.

## **4 Decision of the accreditation commission**

### **The decision of the Accreditation Commission of February 15, 2018**

The resolution of the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS is based on the University's application, as well as the expert review and the on-site visit covered in the expert report.

The on-site visit of the University took place on December 4-5, 2017, according to the previously agreed schedule.

The accreditation decision is based on the Accreditation Criteria developed by the AHPGS. The Accreditation Criteria are developed by the AHPGS in close accordance with the existing criteria and requirements valid in the Federal Republic of Germany and based on the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" (ESG), established by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

The Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS discussed the procedural documents and the vote of the expert group.

The regulated study period in the program "Physical Therapy" is four years/eight semesters at the University followed by a one-year internship. The study program comprises 59 compulsory courses, 12 of them taught in the preparatory year and 47 during the main period of studies. The main language of instruction is English. The bachelor study program "Physical Therapy" is completed with awarding of the academic degree "Bachelor of Science" (B.Sc.). The first batch of students has been admitted to the program in the academic year 2009/2010.

The Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS considers that all Accreditation Criteria are fulfilled and adopts the following decision:

The study program "Physical Therapy" is accredited for the duration of five years, until September 30, 2023.

For further development and enhancement of the study program, as well as of the University as a whole, the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS supports the recommendation articulated in the expert report.