

Akkreditierungsagentur
im Bereich Gesundheit und Soziales
Accreditation Agency in Health and Social Science



Assessment Report

for the application of

Najran University,

College of Nursing,

for the accreditation of the Bachelor Study Program

“Nursing” (Bachelor of Nursing, B. Sc.)

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Decision	21.07.2015

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1 Introduction into the accreditation procedure

In order for the external assessment to be implemented, Najran University has commissioned the Accreditation Agency in Health and Social Science (further referred as the AHPGS). The AHPGS is listed in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR), among Full Members of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), and is also accredited by the German Accreditation Council (until 2019).

Study programs of Najran University, Najran, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, are required by the decision of the University to be accredited by an international accreditation agency. The decision regarding the accreditation of each of the study programs of Najran University, Najran, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, is carried out by the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS.

In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the national regulation in matters of higher education accreditation is established by the National Commission for Academic Accreditation & Assessment (NCAAA, www.ncaaa.org.sa). The specifications formulated by the Commission are legally binding. Thus, every study program must undergo the NCAAA accreditation and comply with the criteria set by the NCAAA Commission.

The accreditation process conducted by the AHPGS runs independently from the NCAAA.

The Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS takes a decision on accreditation of a study program on the basis of the Application documents, the On-Site Visit at Najran University, and the Expert Report.

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 Application 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 below), which is to be approved by the University, and subsequently made available for the expert group, together with all other documentation.

II. Review regarding the content of the programs

Parallel to the first step, the documents are reviewed by the expert group assigned by the accreditation commission of the AHPGS. This is done in order to verify the compliance of the study program with the applicable accreditation criteria set by the Accreditation Commission of AHPGS. 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 to the University. During this visit, discussions are held with members of the University, including the University and department administration, program management, teachers and students. This enables the experts to learn additional details about the program, which complement the information of 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, structure, staff, material resources, course of studies and methods of assessment (selection of students, assessment of achievements, students' support), as well as the program management (program administration, external assurance of study quality).

Following the on-site visit, the expert group issues an expert report for each study program. This is based on the results of the visit, the written review of the study programs, and the documents submitted by the University. The expert reports are made available to the University, in order for it to issue a response opinion.

The expert report, as well as the University's response opinion – together with the submitted documents – is presented to the accreditation commission of the AHPGS for the final decision regarding accreditation, accreditation with conditions or denial of accreditation.

IV. The AHPGS accreditation decision

The accreditation commission of the AHPGS examines the documentation made available, namely the University's Application, its annexes, the summary comprised by the AHPGS, the expert report, as well as the University's response opinion. These documents represent the basis of the commission's decision regarding the accreditation of the study programs, based on the accreditation criteria of the AHPGS.

2 Facts by the time of pre-visit-assessment

2.1 Procedure-related documents

The Application 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 programs (further referred as the Application) of Najran University was submitted to the Accreditation Agency in Health and Social Science (AHPGS e.V.) in electronic format on the 26th January 2014. The contract between Najran University and the AHPGS was signed on the 02nd May 2013.

On the 23rd May 2014 the AHPGS forwarded the open questions and explanatory notes (further referred as the OQ) pertaining to the Application for accreditation for the study programs to the University. On the 3rd June 2014 the University submitted the answers to the open questions and explanatory notes (further referred as the AOO) to the AHPGS in electronic format.

The present document presents the summary of the AHPGS for the “Nursing” Bachelor study program. The application documentation submitted by Najran University follows the outline recommended by the AHPGS. Along with the application request for accreditation of the “Nursing” Bachelor study program, 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):

Annex	Description
1	Course description
2	Course overview
3	Plan of course of study
4	List of regulations
5	Executive Summary
6	Teaching interdependence matrix
7	Short CVs of the teaching personnel
8	Formal declaration from the management board of the Higher Education Institution

Table 1: Specific Documents for “Nursing” Bachelor Program

The application, the open questions (OQ) and the answer to the open questions (AOQ) as well as the additional documents 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 of the study program

University	Najran University
Faculty/Department	College of Nursing
Title of the study program	Nursing
Degree awarded	Bachelor of Nursing (B. Sc.)
Working language	English (except for Quality Management, Arabic and Islamic courses)
Students' gender	Female only
Form of studies	Full-time
Organizational structure	Sunday – Thursday, 8:00 – 15:00
Period of education	8 semesters (plus, one year of internship)
Credit Points (CP) according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)	The program is offered only by the credit hour system: 123 credit hours
Credit hour	1 credit hour = 1 contact hour of a theoretical course; = 2 contact hours of a practical course (lab training); = 3 contact hours of hospital training (self-study hours are not included).
Workload	Total: 6,570hours Contact hours: 2,805hours Individual work: 1,845 hours ² Practice (internship): 1,920 hours
CP for the final paper	The program does not require a final thesis, but ends

² The amount of individual work hours was determined for each course individually based on national expert evaluation. Please visit the website of the College of Nursing (<http://portal.nu.edu.sa/en/web/nursing-college/165>) to see the samples of course specifications according to the template of the NCAAA. As an improvement measure, the management of the program is planning to include students into the process of calculating self-study hours in order to obtain more accurate information.

	in a graduation project
Beginning of the study program	August 2009
First accreditation	Not applicable
Time of admission	Each semester
Number of available places on the program	30
Number of enrolled students in the academic year 2012/2013	7
Number of graduates In the academic year 2012/2013	7
Particular enrollment conditions	Saudi Arabian Secondary School Certificate (science section) or its equivalent; Aptitude Exam (provided by the National Centre for Assessment in Higher Education)
Tuition fees	Not applicable (cf. Question 11 in the AOQ)

Table2: Structural Data of "Nursing" Study Program

The "Nursing" Bachelor study program is designed for training nursing skills. As the program is taught in English (apart from *Quality Management*, Arabic and Islamic courses), the first preparatory semester is dedicated to mastering the language as well as development of general learning, thinking, research and computer skills. During the second and the third semesters, the students build their scientific, ethical and cultural background and are briefly introduced to the field of nursing. In the course of the fourth and the fifth semesters, the field knowledge of applied nursing is deepened: the students practice in labs and learn independently by preparing essays and presentations. Within the last three semesters of the study program, the students are deeply involved in the nursing sciences and gain practical experience under supervision in hospitals. The compulsory internship year assures that the graduates have the necessary knowledge, attitude and competency to perform the essential, common technical and administrative nursing skills.

2.2.2 Qualification objectives and employment opportunities

According to the University, the program is designed to develop general and field-related aspects and is aimed at training research, scientific, or other type of skills and ability to solve problems independently as well as preparing a student for social participation and work in the field of nursing. The University indicates the following learning objectives:

- Empower the students with comprehensive knowledge of nursing sciences, including theories and principles related to the field, with reference to the correlated sciences, arts and legislations essential for nursing practice.
- Expand the students' ability to use critical thinking scientifically and professionally in solving patient health problems.
- Prepare the students to participate and cooperate actively in health teams considering social and cultural issues while providing holistic nursing care to individuals, families and communities.
- Develop the students' ability to use numerical, statistical and communication skills in addressing health problems with appropriate application of suggested solution.
- Qualify the students to apply nursing process in solving problems and in providing competent holistic patient care according to evidence-based practice with respect to Islamic culture (see Application A2.1).

First and foremost, the program is expected to prepare qualified specialists with a thorough theoretical and practical knowledge in nursing. The graduates are supposed to not only provide nursing care to patients with different health problems and of different age groups but also understand the determinants and principles of public health and community nursing and show abilities for leadership and further research in the sphere.

In order to prepare its students for the professional occupation, the program trains their cognitive, psychomotor and communication skills. On the cognitive level, the students are taught to use modern technology for controlling patients' condition, interpret data related to patients health problems, plan and implement suitable and competent health care. Psychomotor skills are developed to ensure the graduates' ability to provide safe, competent and efficient nursing care according to standard precautions as well as promptly apply nursing procedures and interventions in most severe and life-threatening cases. Since nursing presupposes constant professional communication with

patients, family members and colleagues, attention is paid to the development of communication and interpersonal skills.

On successful completion of the Bachelor program in Nursing, the students will be entitled to apply to the Saudi Arabian Commission for Health Specialists (SCFHS) for registration as a Nurse. In correspondence with the strategic plan of the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Health for 2009/2018, there is a demand for all qualified graduates in the nursing field, whether in governmental or private health institutions, and a great shortage of national staff scientifically highly qualified in nursing in Najran area and all over the Kingdom.

Initially introduced for the reasons of shifting Saudi Arabian demographics and high population growth, the program is designed to address the pressing problem of a shortage of nursing staff in Najran as one of southern Saudi Arabia districts. A wide range of job opportunities in governmental hospitals and local health care centers are open to graduates of the program. Graduates can pursue a career in the private center or work as a school nurse (see Application A3.1). The University states that all of the 7 graduates of the College of Nursing have found jobs in various governmental hospitals, primary health care centers and one student has been appointed as a Demonstrator at the College of Nursing.

2.2.3 Structure of the study program and exam system

According to the documents provided by the University, the “Nursing” Bachelor study program comprises 42 courses within 8 semesters, plus a one year internship. There are no optional or elective courses, all courses are compulsory. All courses have to be completed within 8 semesters before the internship year starts.

As stated in the Application, all courses of the program can be divided into two categories: program-specific courses (17) and supportive courses (25) (see Application A1.12). The AOO, Question 21 provides the modularization of the courses clarifying which category each of the 42 obligatory courses belongs to.

Program-specific courses that are taught exclusively by the staff members of the College of Nursing are presented in Table 3:

Semester	Course Title	Attendance hours
2	Medical Terminology	30
3	Health Assessment	60
	Nursing Ethics	15
	First Aid	45
4	Fundamentals of Nursing	240
5	Medical Surgical Nursing (1)	270
	Teaching and Learning Principles	15
6	Medical Surgical Nursing (2)	120
	Critical Care Nursing	120
	Mental Health Nursing	120
	Health Education	30
7	Obstetrics & Gynecology Nursing	225
	Pediatric Nursing	225
8	Community Health Nursing	135
	Nursing Administration	120
	Research Methods for Nursing	30
	Graduation Project	45
Total:		1,845

Table 3: Overview of Program-Specific Courses

Apart from the program-specific courses, the students are obliged to attend supportive courses in related fields of study and humanities. Unlike the program-specific ones, these 25 courses are offered in collaboration with other study programs of Najran University. The courses can be further divided into supportive science courses (14) and supportive humanity courses (11).

The fourteen supportive science courses are specially designed for the “Nursing” program but taught by the teaching staff from other programs e.g. pharmacy and medicine. The list of the courses offered is as follows:

Semester	Course Title	Attendance hours
1	Computer Skills	90
2	Chemistry for Nursing	45
	Physics for Nursing	45
	Anatomy and Psychology (1)	75

3	Psycho Socio-Cultural Variations in Health	30
	Quality Management	30
	Anatomy and Psychology (2)	60
4	Nutrition	30
	Microbiology & Parasitology	60
	Biochemistry	30
5	Pathology	45
	Pharmacology	30
	Growth & Development	30
8	Biostatistics & Epidemiology	30
Total:		630

Table 4: Overview of Supportive Science Courses

The “Nursing” Bachelor program includes 11 humanity courses that, as part of the supportive part of the program, comprise specialized English and general learning, research and computer competence classes offered in the preparatory first semester as well as Islamic Culture and Arabic classes taught throughout the study period. Information on the number of attendance hours and semester numbers is presented in Table 5.

Semester	Course Title	Attendance hours
1	English (Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking, Grammar)	120
	Learning Thinking and Research Skills	30
2	Islamic Culture	120
3		
4		
7		
2	Skills in Arabic Language	30
3	Arabic Writing	30
Total:		330

Table5: Overview of Supportive Humanity Classes

In the AOO, the University’s answer to Question 7 clarifies that the students of the “Nursing” Bachelor program attend only preparatory courses (i.e. English classes) in their first semester as well as *Learning Thinking and Research*

Skills together with students from other study programs, such as Medicine, Computer Sciences and Radiological Sciences.

The Course Description (see Annex 1) covers the following aspects: course title, semester, number of credit hours, language of instruction, description of the course, its educational objectives, and the methods for student's assessment. Moreover, Attachment A1 of the Application presents correlation between study-program objectives (see Paragraph 2.2.2 of the present document) and corresponding courses, applied teaching methods, and assessment techniques.

The study program "Nursing" applies such forms of teaching as lectures, tutorials, small group discussions, practical and laboratory sessions, independent work over assignments as well as a one-year internship and different teaching strategies and methods: case studies, reading assignments, presentations by students, individual student reports, brainstorming, group research projects, etc. There are 3 courses offered by means of e-learning, while other courses use electronic teaching facilities.

At the moment the study program does not offer student exchange with other universities or studies abroad at the level of undergraduates but demonstrators are prepared to pursue their master degree from other international universities. The College of Nursing does not have contractual collaboration with other Higher Education Institutions. However, possibilities for establishing cooperation with national and international peer programs are considered (see Application A1.15).

Regarding collaboration with national organizations, Najran King Khalid, Al Fisalyia Primary as well as Maternity and Children hospitals share their hospital settings for students' internship training and offer supervision in different clinical settings. The first introduction to hospital surroundings takes place in the 5th semester and every new semester, as part of their university courses the "Nursing" students get acquainted with different medical wards and departments of the above mentioned hospitals. For detailed information on the correlation between the institutions and parts of the curriculum they are responsible for, refer to the Application, Paragraph A1.12.

Throughout the course of studies and their one-year internship, the students are guided by the faculty staff and hospital personnel. Practical sessions are

conducted under supervision of the faculty staff members, whereas 'field' trainings are monitored and evaluated by both hospital trainers and the program faculty members. The program sets the following requirements for the personnel responsible for mentoring and supporting students:

- Teaching the theoretical part of both program-specific and supportive courses requires at least a degree of Master of Science in Nursing and relevant work experience of not less than 3 years;
- A non-nursing supportive course can be taught at least by a lecturer with 3 years of teaching experience;
- Clinical instructors shall have at least a bachelor degree in Nursing and experience of minimum 5 years in training nursing students.

Annexes 6 and 7 give information on teaching and hospital staffs' corresponding competence and academic background.

At the last stage, the internship year, hospital mentors are expected to outline goals for the students' further development, encourage the students to participate in patient care, provide real life experience for them and serve a role model for the graduates. The internship serves as an in-service educational program for role adjustment and better transition from college to work and practical application of the gained knowledge. In their answer to Question 22 in the AOQ, the University claims that due to desperate need for female nurses in Saudi Arabia, the graduates are offered jobs right after the completion of their internship.

As already mentioned, the "Nursing" Bachelor program does not provide for student exchange or studies abroad; nonetheless, all courses are said to refer to international textbooks and are taught in English (except for *Quality Management*, Arabic and Islamic courses). As the Application states, the Nursing study program was compared to analogous international programs to assure its alliance with the international standards in the field, which should facilitate the graduates' efforts to apply and study for a Master's or PhD degree in a foreign university.

Both the University and the program encourage faculty members to conduct scientific research work by providing funds for an accepted research project and considering research activity in evaluation and promotion of faculty members (see Application A1.19). In accordance with the curriculum, basics of

scientific research and development of evidence-based results are practiced in the program in the 8th semester at *Graduation Project*. Students are required to submit a graduation research project as a prerequisite for the completion of their studies. Furthermore, they are expected to be open to new ideas and keep abreast of recent research findings in the field. The course provides its students with the opportunity to explore and study an area of clinical nursing practice, nursing education or nursing administration under an instructor's guidance.

Staff members are also encouraged to conduct scientific research since research activity is an essential criterion for promotions. In order to serve both purposes, the program arranges seminars to introduce new ideas or practices at different specialties. Both students and staff are encouraged to attend such seminars and engage in them, but no conferences have been specifically arranged for students (AOQ, Question 13). At the moment, the program is taking part in a project titled "Knowledge, attitude and practice of smoking among male and female students of health colleges in Najran University" together with other health colleges.

Concerning the examination system of the Bachelor program "Nursing", a variety of assessment methods is used during the course of studies. Since the study program is not modularized, the following Assessment Schedule is used to evaluate student's performance at each course:

Assessment task (e.g. essay, test, group project, examination etc.)	Week due
Quiz	5th
Midterm written exam	9th
Midterm practical exam*	11th
Continuous assessment (attendance, participation, home assignments)	1st – 15th
Final comprehensive written & practical* exam	16th
* Practical exams are applied only in course of practical trainings in labs/hospitals.	

Table 6: Assessment Schedule for "Nursing" Bachelor Program

There is no re-examination specific schedule; in some extraordinary cases, for instance, sickness or other emergency cases approved by the university sys-

tem and regulations, re-examination is planned accordingly. Academic feasibility of the evaluation methods is ensured by the academic board (committee) for reviewing of the examination process used for the final exam .A student may advance to classes prescribed by the curriculum for the next semester if they have successfully passed the requirements of the courses of the current semester. Students may advance to classes prescribed by the curriculum for the next semester if they have successfully passed the requirements of the courses of the current semester. In case a student fails to succeed in completing requirements of a particular course, the student has to repeat the course along with the courses of the next semester (see Annex 4Section A, Paragraph 8).

Najran University applies the following grading system:

Percentage	Evaluation	Letter Grade	Grade Point Average out of 5
95 - 100	Excellent Plus	A +	5.00
90 to less than 95	Excellent	A	4.75
85 to less than 90	Very Good Plus	B +	4.50
80 to less than 85	Very Good	B	4.00
75 to less than 80	Good Plus	C +	3.50
70 to less than 75	Good	C	3.00
65 to less than 70	Pass plus	D +	2.50
60 to less than 65	Pass	D	2.00
Less than 60	Fail	F	1.00

Table 7: Grading system at Najran University

The College of Nursing is committed to applying Najran University’s provisions for the recognition of credits of those students who have transferred from other universities. As for the recognition of student exchange credits, this aspect is not applicable because the program “Nursing” does not currently include student exchange or studies abroad (the Application, A1.15).Nevertheless, there is a possibility that cooperation with national and international peer programs can be established in the future.

Regarding the compensatory measures for students with disabilities or chronic illnesses, no such regulation is envisaged for the “Nursing” Bachelor program as one of the main admission conditions set by the University is that appli-

cants shall be physically and medically fit. For more information, refer to Section 2.2.4 *Admission requirements* of the present document. In case of temporary or acquired disability of an enrolled university student, the study program administrator and the committee of the Deanship of Admission and Registration decide whether such a student is able to continue their education at the program (see AOQ, Question 9).

In its answer to Question 11 in the AOQ, the University indicates that all Saudi Arabian students get financial support of 1000 SAR (equivalent to 267 US\$) per month. In addition, Najran University offers such financial support to its students as extra subsidy of 500 SAR (133 US\$), a marriage subsidy of 1000 SAR (267 US\$) or a university loan of 1000 SAR (267 US\$). For a full list of financial aid possibilities, refer to Question 11 in the AOQ.

2.2.4 Admission requirements

Admission requirements for the "Nursing" Bachelor program include a Saudi Arabian Secondary School Certificate (science section) or its equivalent and an Aptitude Exam (provided by the National Centre for Assessment in Higher Education). The priority of acceptance is given to the applicants with the highest equivalent percentage (60% of the secondary school grade + 40% of the Aptitude Exam grade). Moreover, to be accepted to Najran University an applicant is to fulfill the following general rules of the University:

- 1) Apply for the university not longer than within two years after school graduation;
- 2) Be of good conduct and behavior;
- 3) Be physically fit;
- 4) In case of employment, obtain approval from their employer regardless of whether it is a governmental or private enterprise;
- 5) Have no previous academic or disciplinary expulsion from Najran University or any other institution of education;
- 6) Be not registered for a university degree at the same university or at another institution that they have previously attained (see Annex 4).

Applications are to be submitted online to the Deanship for Admission and Registration (although some documents are sent per post) in the specified periods for each semester. For instance, for admission in fall semester 2013/2014 one had to apply within a week from 27 June 2013 to 5 July

2013. The applicants shall receive the first reply within 72 hours after having applied. To complete the registration procedure, further communication with the Deanship of Admission and Registration is required (see AOO, Question 5). The acceptance application will be repealed for applicants who do not complete all procedures of acceptance in a timely manner without an acceptable excuse from the Deanship for Admission and Registration. If it becomes apparent that a newly accepted student has been previously dismissed for disciplinary or academic reasons, the acceptance shall be nullified.

2.3 Conditions of studies and quality assurance

2.3.1 Human resources

The University emphasizes that the number of instructors in the program varies from one academic year to another because all the staff of the program is employed on the basis of annual renewable contracts.

At the moment when the Application was submitted, the teaching staff of the "Nursing" bachelor program comprised in total 25 members, out of whom 16 (64%) were employed on full-time and 9 (36%) on part-time basis. Among the full-time teaching staff there were 2 associate professors, 3 assistant professors, and 2 lecturers. Besides, there was 1 demonstrator, 2 physicians, and 6 clinical instructors (trainers). The technical-administrative staff consisted of 1 supervisor of nursing skill laboratories and 3 coordinators for academic, student, and staff affairs. The part-time staff employed for the study program included 2 assistant professors, 6 lecturers, and 1 teaching assistant. For the scope of professorial instruction in the study program, refer to the table in Paragraph B1.2 of the Application or Annex 7. All in all, the University provides the following ratio of the teaching personnel in the study program:

Professors	Lecturers	Practitioners	External staff
24%	23.6%	22.8%	29.6%

Table 8: Ratio of Teaching Personnel in College of Nursing

The students of the program are expected to complete their studies in 5 years: 4 years (8 semesters, 15 weeks each) at university followed by one year of an internship at a hospital. The new enrollment capacity of the program is 30 places; admission is each semester. The total number of students in case of full enrolment is 240 students. Thus, the expected student-teacher ratio is approximately 12:1, which means that there are 12 students per each

full-time teacher (with two part-time teachers taken as a full-time one). However, in correspondence with the statistics provided for the academic year 2012/2013, 192 students are enrolled in the study program. Hence, the actual student-teacher ratio can be lower.

Paragraph B1.1 of the Application states that in accordance with the guidelines of the General Secretariat of the Saudi Arabian Higher Education Council, the program sets the following requirements for the personnel responsible for mentoring and supporting students:

- A demonstrator shall have at least a bachelor degree from one of the Saudi Arabian Universities or other recognized University with a very good average grade;
- Teaching a theoretical program-specific requires at least a degree of Master in Nursing from one of the Saudi Arabian Universities or other recognized University with a very good average grade.
- To be Assistant Professor, one has to hold a Doctorate degree with at least a very good average grade. An Associate Professor needs to have a doctoral degree, experience of faculty membership of not less than four years after appointment to the rank of Assistant Professor and be scientifically promoted to the rank of Associate Professor from a Saudi Arabian University or other recognized University.
- To be promoted to the rank of Full Professor, one has to obtain the experience of faculty membership of not less than eight years including at least four years as Associate Professor.

Annexes 6 and 7 give information on teaching and hospital staffs' corresponding competence and academic background.

As reported in Section B1.4 of the Application, selection of the teaching personnel for the "Nursing" Bachelor study program is based on the rules for Saudi Arabian employees of university faculties issued by the Higher Education Council. Recruitment processes ensure that an applicant for a teaching position at university has a specific area of expertise as well as the personal qualities, experience, and skills to meet the teaching requirements. The candidates are provided with a full position description and conditions of employment, together with specific information about expectations of a candidate's contribution to the program as part of the teaching team. Prior to making an appointment, the university checks the information on references, experience

and qualifications provided by an applicant. Assessment of qualifications includes verification of the standing and reputation of the institutions from which references are obtained.

The University and the College offer chances for the academic improvement of the teaching staff. The University has established a Skill Development Unit that provides for annual plans for personnel qualification development in accordance with training needs. Continuous training programs in teaching are provided including effective use of new and developing technologies (see Application B1.5).

2.3.2 Material and space resources

Najran University claims that the "Nursing" Bachelor study program is financed solely by the University; no external support from the Ministry of Health of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia or any other institution is provided for the program (see Paragraph B3.4 of the Application).

The study program has at its disposal seven lecture halls with the capacity of 30 places each equipped with electronic audio and visual teaching technologies (data show). Besides this, there are laboratories for teaching different practical sessions: one computer lab with Internet access and computers available in the ratio of one computer per 25 students, one Medical and Surgical Nursing Laboratory, one First Aid Laboratory, one laboratory for Obstetrics and Gynecology, one Pediatric Laboratory, one Anatomy and Physiology Laboratory, one Microbiology Laboratory and one Chemistry laboratory³. For the list of basic lab equipment, see Annex 8. Further practical training is carried out on the premises of King Khalid, Al Fisalyia Primary as well as Maternity and Children hospitals.

The College consists of 3 main buildings. The 1st building of the faculty houses 4 offices for the administration staff, not to mention 5 offices for the faculty staff members. There is also a meeting room, a library and 7 teaching halls in it. The 2nd building contains 6 labs (for practicing Nursing, Midwifery, Anatomy and Physiology, First Aid, and Chemistry courses, plus a computer lab). Four skill labs and a Supervisor's office are located in the 3rd building of the College.

³ See the website of the College of Nursing: <http://portal.nu.edu.sa/en/web/nursing-college/165> (31.08.2015)

The students of the program enjoy access to the faculty library that has in total 1,211 nursing and non-specialized books. The library does not offer any periodicals but they can be found in the centralized electronic library. In addition to the unlimited online access, the library is open from 8:00 till 14:00, 5 days per week from Sunday till Thursday. According to Question 12 in the AOQ, although female students do not have physical access to the central library (the Prince Meshaal library) at the moment, they can use its resources both electronically and by using interlibrary services. The University emphasizes that the Faculty library's funds constitute part of the University's centralized system.

2.3.3 Quality assurance of studies

According to the information provided by the University, there are Deputy Rector and Dean Offices as well as Development and Quality Units responsible for development and quality assurance. The Development and Quality Unit implements Dean's policies at the level of a college and monitors execution of improvement plans at the level of college courses and programs. At the College of Nursing, a Development and Quality Unit was established in 2010 following the administration decision of the Deputy Rector for Development and Quality.

By means of these Development and Quality Units, the Dean of development and quality administrates all quality activities and implementation of development plans at the college level. The Dean Office also ensures technical support and arranges different activities and workshops for increasing quality awareness and training faculty members and staff to improve their performance according to annual studies of their training needs. Moreover, the Dean is also responsible for supervising the implementation of University's strategic plans and execution of projects at the level of the college and programs.

The University emphasizes its reliance upon the recommendations of the National Commission for Accreditation and Assessment (hereinafter the NCAAA) and at institutional and program levels follows the NCAAA standards of quality evaluation. In order to fulfill these standards, much attention is given to research activities, teaching and learning processes, student support, and learning resources.

For the “Nursing” Bachelor study program, the overall evaluation of the program and its academic achievements is carried out on a regular basis. At the end of each semester, program coordinator submits a report for the discussion of program improvements by the program council. The evaluation data is then studied, analyzed, summarized and submitted to the Development and Quality Unit. The Unit designs an annual plan for improvement of the college, it monitors execution of the plan and submit follow-up reports to the Deanship of development and quality.

Evaluation of teaching is based on student questionnaires, review of teachers’ portfolios and the overall assessment of their academic achievement. In accordance with evaluation results, improvement plans for the weak points revealed by students are designed and rewards for students’ good academic performance are granted to the faculty staff members. To assess the professional relevance of the study program, a consultation committee consisting of different representatives of the field has been appointed. The committee members share their views regarding the program improvement. What is more, via the Alumni Office the program keeps in touch with their graduates to follow their career and upgrade the existing data on the field. From time to time, graduates and employees are also asked to fill in questionnaires on their practical experience.

The devised evaluation methods imply active student participation. All students in the program take part in the evaluation of the courses they study and quality of teaching. At the final year, graduates are asked to evaluate the program, learning facilities, and the services offered for students. To introduce students to the culture of quality assurance and facilitate students’ inclusion in the internal quality assurance system of the study program, brochures and quality guide for students have been designed.

As already stated, the “Nursing” Bachelor study program was first launched in 2009. According to the enrollment statistics provided by the University, there were 26 applicants admitted when the program was first offered. In the years 2010 and 2011, the number of enrolled students ranged between 14 and 4 students, respectively. In 2012, there were 7 students admitted to the program and 7 students graduated from it (for more details, see the Application A5.6 and Annex 9). It is stressed that the program is designed for physically

fit female students. As for the student workload, it is claimed to vary from 12 to 20 credit hours per semester.

All information about the study program and requirements can be found on the official websites of Najran University and College of Nursing and in the student handbook, which contains schedules, names of the faculty staff and clinical instructors, opening hours of university facilities, etc. The program also organizes an orientation week for the new students held on their 1st day of studies. Further, the students are assigned to the faculty staff members for academic advising at a rate of 30-35 students per staff member. In the form of individual and group meetings, an academic advisor is responsible for providing academic support, i.e. explaining college systems and regulations, giving instructions on workload and courses, helping the students to identify and overcome academic problems, and monitoring their academic progress. See also Section 2.2.3 *Modularization of the study program and exam system* of the present document for more information on academic and hospital mentors and their duties.

Communication between the teaching staff and the students is possible mainly in person during an individual counseling appointment. Each academic advisor must declare an hour per week for academic advising of their group. Besides this, each staff member has to announce their office hours for different courses they teach in the current semester. As for the practical part of the course, clinical instructors are responsible for giving tutorial support for students at clinical areas in the ratio of 1:15. Student suggestions and complaints in the written form can be also dropped into a suggestion box and or sent per email. An approved committee deals with different suggestions and complaints according to the approved policy, internal regulations and law.

2.4 Institutional context

Established in 2006, Najran University is located on the Eastern outskirts of the city of Najran, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and occupies an area of 18 million square meters, thus being the largest University campus in the country. Although currently only 18.905 students are enrolled at Najran University, the overall capacity is 45.000 male and female students. For the enrolment rates in the academic year 2012/2013, refer to the AOQ, Question 1.

According to development plans, the university will include two campuses for males and females, consisting of 15 and 10 colleges, respectively. The university will also have a medical city, a research center, sport and entertainment arenas and accommodation for the faculty and staff members as well as students. A future investment city with hotels, commercial centers and private schools, etc. is planned to serve as a trust foundation for the university.

The male campus (the Al-Swadei campus) is only 15 minutes by car away from Najran Airport. The male campus is composed of 8 colleges: Applied Medical Sciences, Medicine, Sharia and Fundamentals of Religion, Pharmacy, Dentistry, Engineering, Arts and Sciences, and Computer Science and Information Systems. The campus contains an excellent IT infrastructure, copy centers, a theatre, a nursery, a mosque, and is provided with security.

It takes just 10 minutes to drive from the administrative building of the university to the female campus (the Al-athayba campus). The campus is composed of 7 colleges: Applied Medical Sciences, Medicine, Nursing, Education, Administrative Sciences, Community, and Computer Science and Information Systems. Like the male campus, it also includes excellent IT infrastructure, copy centers, a theatre, a nursery, a mosque, and is provided with security. The university hospital is situated in a separate building and is open from 8:00 am to 10:00 pm from Saturday to Thursday. Regular buses are provided for the students during the academic year which cover all parts of Najran. This service is free of charge and helps students be on time for their classes.

Currently, Najran University offers 38 Bachelor and 8 Master study programs in addition to a preparatory year possibility. The College of Nursing teaches two programs: the "Nursing" Bachelor program and the "Midwifery" diploma program. At the moment, the faculty does not offer any master programs. The College of Nursing is located at the Athyba County as part of Najran University female campus. It was established in 2004 to train practitioners in the field of midwifery and nursing. For a description of the College facilities, please refer to Subsection 2.3.2 *Material and space resources* of the present document. The College was initially managed by the Ministry of Health of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and both programs were designed to give a diploma degree (three years of study). In 2007, the faculty joined Najran University and in the first fall semester 2009/2010 the "Nursing" program was convert-

ed to award bachelor degrees. There are currently 172 female students including internship students.

In its Application, the University refers to the latest feedback from practitioners in the nursing sphere that indicates the priority of the labor market in regards to graduates' skills. Although 75% of the program graduates show satisfaction with the current contents and structure of the study program, the University acknowledges the need for the program to focus on such practical areas in Nursing as critical nursing care, intensive nursing care and neonatal intensive nursing care. Furthermore, the College has pointed out that it is planning the transition from content-based education to outcome-based education as one of the major developments for the program within the next three to five years. For this purpose, the students will be encouraged to get engaged in community activities; the faculty staff will be taught to use modern strategies in teaching in order to improve their performance, both students and the academic personnel will be encouraged to take part in research activities and seminars

3 Expert report

3.1 Preliminary remarks

Study programs of Najran University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, are required by the decision of the University to be accredited by an international accreditation agency. The accreditation criteria of the Accreditation Agency in Health and Social Science (AHPGS) are the basis for the accreditation decision. These criteria can be found on the webpage of the AHPGS⁴. 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 AHPGS criteria include the following aspects:

- 1) Program Aims and Learning Outcomes
- 2) Curriculum Design
- 3) Staff
- 4) Facilities and Learning Resources
- 5) Study Process and Student Assessment
- 6) Program Management

The main focus of the accreditation procedure is the assessment of learning outcomes and objectives of the study programs, the structure of the study programs, the examination system and transparency, the provision of adequate staffing and facilities, the implementation of the results of quality assurance in terms of the further development of the study programs and the implementation of equal opportunities for all University members involved.

The following study programs were the subjects of the accreditation procedure:

College of Applied Medical Sciences:

- a) "Clinical Laboratory Sciences" (Bachelor of Clinical Laboratory Sciences);

⁴http://ahpgs.de/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/accred_criteria.pdf

- b) "Physiotherapy" (Bachelor of Physiotherapy);
- c) "Radiological Sciences" (Bachelor of Radiological Sciences);

College of Nursing:

- d) "Nursing" (Bachelor of Nursing).

The accreditation procedure of these study programs offered at Najran University is carried out by the AHPGS according to the previously agreed structure.

As the first step, the documents submitted by the University were reviewed by all nominated experts with regard to the specified criteria as well as disciplinary and substantive aspects.

As the second step, a part of the nominated expert group implemented an on-site visit at Najran University, Kingdom of Saudi-Arabia, with the aim to clarify open aspects and also to verify the descriptions and statements presented in the University documents.

The third step had been the preparation of the expert report by the expert group. The report is structured in compliance with the accreditation criteria approved by the AHPGS. The documents of the university, the evaluation feedback from the experts regarding the documents and the results of the discussions with the representatives of the University during the on-site visit serve as the basis for the statements made in the expert report.

The last step is the decision regarding the accreditation of the study program of Najran University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The decision is taken by the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS.

3.2 Expert group

The following experts were appointed by the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS for the evaluation of the study programs.

As representatives of higher education and health care institutions:

Prof. Dr. Birgit Vosseler⁵

Professor of Nursing Science, Faculty of Social Work, Health and Nursing, University of Applied Sciences Ravensburg-Weingarten, Germany

⁵ People shown in italics have participated in the on-site visit assessment.

Visiting Professor at the School of Nursing at Shandong University, China and at KwaZulu Natal University, South Africa

Prof. Dr. Peter Dieter

Professor of Biochemistry, Institute of Physiological Chemistry, Medical Faculty, Dresden University of Technology, Germany

Prof. Dr. Christian Grueneberg

Professor of Physiotherapy at the University of Applied Medical Sciences Bochum, Germany; Head of the study program "Physiotherapy"

Prof. Dr. Stephan Lehnart

Professor of Translational Cardiology, Clinic of Cardiology and Pneumology, University Medical Center Goettingen, Georg-August-University Goettingen, Germany; Visiting Professor of the Biomedical Research and Medical Technology Center (BioMET), University of Maryland Medical School

Prof. Dr. Christian Trumpp

Professor of Logoaedics and Neuro/Patho-Linguistics at the Faculty of Health Sciences, IB University of Applied Sciences Berlin, Germany; Rector of the IB University of Applied Sciences Berlin; Chairman of the Academic Senate of Study Program Directors in Logoaedics

Prof. Dr. Johannes Keogh

Professor of Nursing Sciences at the University of Applied Sciences Fulda, Germany; former Head of the study program "Nursing"; currently responsible for foreign relations at the program "Nursing"

Dr. Werner Reiche

Medical specialist in neuroradiology and vascular intervention at the Central Institute of Diagnostic and Interventional Radiology, Ludwigshafen Hospital Clinical Care Centre, Germany

Beate Methke

University Medical Center of Freiburg, Germany

Dr. Dirk Haeger

University Medical Centre of Hamburg, Germany

As student representative:

Mathias Maximilian Dilger

Student at the University of Freiburg, Germany

3.3 Expert report

The Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS nominated the above mentioned list of expert for the implementation of written review and the on-site visit at Najran University.

During March and April 2014, the relevant documents were made available to the group of experts for written evaluation with regard to the specified criteria as well as the disciplinary and substantive aspects. The AHPGS received the experts' evaluations in May 2014. These evaluation results served as the basis for the open questions forwarded to the University on 26 May 2014.

The University submitted the answers to the open questions by 3 June 2014. Consequently, the AHPGS processed these answers and integrated them into the program summary as appropriate.

The self-evaluation report, its accompanying documents, and the summary of the study program were forwarded to the members of the expert group.

The on-site visit was carried out on 22-25 February 2015 according to the previously agreed schedule. The expert group was accompanied by the representatives from the central office of the AHPGS.

The expert group met on 22 February 2015 for the initial discussion and briefing by the AHPGS prior to the on-site visit. They discussed the submitted application documents and the results of the written evaluation as well as other procedure-related questions and foreseeable problems. Furthermore, they prepared the plan of the on-site visit and revised the transportation-relevant aspects.

In the course of the on-site visit, the experts held open discussions with the University management, leading representatives of different faculties, program directors and teachers, as well as with groups of students representing each program. The experts observed and examined the University facilities, equipment and study premises such as libraries, lecture halls, classrooms and laboratories.

The expert report is structured in compliance with the accreditation criteria approved by the AHPGS. The study program will be discussed in a comprehensive manner below. The documents submitted by the university, the experts' feedback on these documents, the observations made during the on-site

visit and the results of the discussions with the university community serve as the basis for the statements made in the expert report.

(0) Introduction and comprehensive remarks

Najran University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, was established in 2006 as a public state-funded higher education institution.

Currently, the University hosts over 18.000 students and offers 38 Bachelor and 8 Master degree programs. There are 15 colleges at the University providing education in such spheres as Applied Medical Sciences, Computer Science and Information Systems, Education, Engineering, Administrative Sciences, Languages, Sharia and other.

The University consists of female and male campuses offering education in 10 and 15 colleges, respectively. Both campuses are equipped with all necessary infrastructures, including a theatre, a nursery and a mosque. The University Library and the Hospital provide educational and training opportunities for all students. It is noteworthy that students can travel into the city of Najran on buses free-of-charge.

With regard to current developments, the University is planning to open more colleges in both female and male campuses, to establish a medical city and a research centre, to improve study premises, equipment, recreation facilities as well as accommodation resources for students and members of the teaching staff. Given the fact that the number of students is yearly growing, the University places great value on the enhancement and modernization of its infrastructure.

According to the provided information, the University strives to stimulate more dynamic research activities among students and teachers. Therefore, the Dean of the University offers additional financial support to enthusiastic and active researchers.

The study programs to be accredited are offered by two colleges of the University:

- College of Applied Medical Sciences,
- College of Nursing.

The College of Applied Medical Sciences was founded in 2006. It includes three departments: Clinical Laboratory Sciences, Physiotherapy and Radiological Sciences representing the respective study programs. In the academic year 2012/2013, the enrollment rate at the College of Applied Medical Sciences constituted 89 students (all male) in the program "Clinical Laboratory Sciences", 137 students (all male) in the program "Physical Therapy" and 121 students (73 male and 48 female) in the program "Radiological Sciences". When compared to the amount of graduates in the same year (29, 31 and 34 students, respectively) the number of students in the college reveals a clear tendency to increase.

The College of Nursing was initially managed by the Ministry of Health. In 2007, it became part of Najran University. The College offers two programs: "Nursing" and "Midwifery". In the academic year 2012/2013, there were 192 students enrolled in the program in total, and 7 students who graduated the program. Hence, the College of Nursing also witnesses a considerable increase in the enrollment rates.

(1) Program aims and learning outcomes

The objective of the study program "Nursing" is to provide students with theoretical knowledge and practical skills related to the field of nursing practice. The program prepares students for working in health care teams functioning according to social and cultural characteristics of local patients, families and communities. By the end of their studies, graduates are expected to be able to explain and apply different nursing interventions and procedures, to identify and deal with health problems of patients of different age groups. Furthermore, students are taught the basic principles of management, health education and research in the field of nursing. The program develops students' abilities to think critically when solving nursing care problems, to properly plan the treatment procedures, and to compare various methods of nursing interventions.

In addition to the mentioned aspects, the program's objective is to encourage students' further professional growth and their participation in continuous self-education activities. Moreover, the program envisages development of communication skills necessary in the health care environment for the establishment of contact with patients, colleagues and other members of the medical personnel. Students are also required to use modern computer and data saving

technologies and to apply numerical skills related to patient care services. With regard to psychomotor skills, graduates of the program must be able to provide safe, competent and efficient nursing care according to standard precautions. Finally, they must implement nursing procedures with respect to patients' rights.

The first year of the program is dedicated to the improvement of English language competences, computer skills and learning methods. In the second half of the first year, students attend courses constituting the basis of nursing studies, such as "Chemistry for Nursing", "Physics for Nursing", "Anatomy and Psychology" and "Medical terminology". From the experts' point of view, the program is very much focused on qualification competences and disciplinary skills taught in program-specific courses such as "Critical Care Nursing" and "Mental Health Nursing". Moreover, the program curriculum includes teaching of interdisciplinary aspects, for instance in the course "Psychosocial Cultural Variations of Health". The research project in the fourth year of studies further complements the list of academic abilities and skills developed in the program. The final internship period (1 year) ensures that graduates are prepared to start working in a health care institution. Moreover, the internship serves the program to correlate its learning objectives with the requirements of the professional practice.

The learning objectives of the study program are estimated to be appropriate for the acquisition of the profession of a nurse. Graduates are expected to meet the increasing demand for nurses in Saudi Arabia, which is triggered by the growth of population in the whole country, and at the same time, by the needs of the particularly fast growing area of Najran.

From the expert's point of view, the program complies with the mission of the University, which is "to provide distinctive education that meets the needs of society and the labor market and to effectively contribute to the sustainable development through applied research, the optimal use of modern technologies and the active partnership at the local, regional and global levels"⁶. The experts also highlight the fact that the curriculum incorporates the principles of evidence-based practice and research methods, as well as the aspect of community care, as important parts of the program content.

⁶ See the official website of the University: <http://portal.nu.edu.sa/en/university-mission> (10.04.2015)

Najran University aims to contribute to the development and expansion of the national labor market and also to the improvement of the general quality of health care system and services in the country. Furthermore, the University's goal is to educate specialists working in accordance with the cultural and ethical framework of local communities. Implementation of the objectives of the study program "Nursing" decidedly contributes to the realization of the University's goals. The program's principal purposes and priorities are clearly and appropriately defined as well as effectively put into action in the course of studies.

The expert group concludes that the requirements of the criterion are met in full.

Considering recommendations for future development in the area of health sciences, the experts underline that the University should work in two directions: one is to offer continuous academic study opportunities for students, and the other is to encourage professional growth and scientific engagement of the teaching staff. Both can be achieved by means of master's degree study programs.

The experts underline that the advanced master studies will require of students to dedicate more thought and effort for the accomplishment of academic work and research projects than it is expected of them in bachelor programs. Moreover, master's degree studies demand from students a higher degree of independence and awareness in their choice of a project or a paper topic, planning and implementation of the theoretical and practical parts of the master thesis, choice of learning methods and the arrangement of independent study time. Finally, master programs should supply students with respective academic and clinical/laboratory tools, as well as with the guidance of qualified supervisors, which constitute an indispensable part of a research-oriented master study program. By means of master programs, the University could prepare a new generation of local academically trained specialists and, thus, continuously lead them to a career in the field of science as well as teaching in higher education institutions.

The experts emphasizes that not each health science bachelor program needs to be developed and individually offered on a master level. Instead, one master program may cover a relatively broad range of study subjects with a focus on general or public health sciences and research competences, particularly those

necessary for the implementation of scientific research in the form of smaller research projects with carefully planned and documented experiments. Such programs are expected to help the University achieve a larger scientific paper output in various specializations, and thus to become more experienced as well as competitive in the field of health care education.

For the current and future teaching staff, one or several master programs may provide an advanced professional environment for continuous improvement in terms of new teaching and research methods in the respective areas of health sciences. Moreover, such programs offer an opportunity for experience exchange with colleges from other universities.

With regard to the aspect of life-long learning, the University may consider the possibility of offering specific study programs for employees for qualification advancement as well as the acquisition of additional qualification competences. These can be master's degree programs focused, for instance, on the areas of health management and health economics or other related specializations, which will enable the employees of the University to move forward in their career.

From the European perspective, internationality is an important aspect of quality evaluation of an individual study program and of a higher education institution as a whole. Therefore, the experts encourage Najran University to establish closer and more interactive contacts with other universities within and outside of Saudi Arabia. Such cooperation should include experience exchange in terms of visiting professors, students' exchange programs and events, and a number of scientific conferences, workshops and discussions organized by and for both teachers and students of the University. By means of such actions, the University can contribute to the solidification of university networking on the national level.

(2) Curriculum design

Students are expected to complete their studies in the program "Nursing" in 5 years: 4 years (8 semesters) at the University followed a one-year internship in a hospital or other institution of health care. The whole study program is structured according to three stages of education:

Phase I – basic or preparatory studies (2 semesters),

Phase II –period of main studies in the program (6 semesters)

Phase III – Internship period (2 semesters or 1 year).

The study program “Nursing” comprises 42 mandatory courses, of which 17 are programs-specific courses and 25 are courses taught by other departments of the University. All courses of the program can be grouped into 3 categories:

- University requirement courses (or humanity courses), which focus on general competences and skills of learning, the Arabic language as well as on Islamic culture. These courses are offered throughout the whole period of education and they are attended by all students of the University, regardless of their program specialty;
- College requirement courses (or supportive science courses), which are fundamental for all specialties in the field of medical sciences and they include courses such as “Anatomy”, “Biostatistics”, “Physiology”, “Chemistry” and other. English is also a college requirement course. These courses are offered mostly in the initial years of the program;
- Program requirement courses (or program-specific courses), which are taught exclusively by the teaching staff of the College of Nursing to the students of the program. These courses provide a thorough theoretical and practical knowledge of specialty and they are usually taught starting with the second year of studies.

The preparatory year consists of university and college requirement courses and is intended to help students in the transition phase between the high school and the university environment. Furthermore, it is designed to improve students’ skills of reading and writing in academic English, to enable them to use various sources of information and learning methods and to develop their skills necessary for working with computer programs.

Phase II or the period of main studies in the program is dedicated to providing students with specific theoretical, practical and scientific knowledge in the chosen field of medical sciences. This period consist of all three categories of courses with the prevalence of the program requirement courses in the final semesters.

Phase III is the internship period with a duration of 1 year. This period offers students an opportunity to integrate into the future career and gain experience of working in an authentic clinical environment. Students are admitted to do their internship only upon the completion of the requirements of all theoretical and practical courses. During this period, students are required to complete rotations in such areas and specialties as adult medical nursing, adult surgical nursing, pediatric nursing, obstetrics nursing and primary health nursing.

Each academic year is planned in compliance with the objective of the program envisaged for that specific period of studies. The complexity of every semester continuously increases leading up to a graduation project and an internship period, both of which require a certain level of autonomy and intensive involvement in professional activities.

The expert group concludes that the requirements of the criterion are met in full.

Nevertheless, it is important to mention the outcomes of the experts' discussion about the University credit system from the European perspective. Taking into account the national particularities and legal requirements, the expert group has concluded that until now the self-study time has not been calculated into the total workload of the program. Given the fact that self-study time, as well as students' independent work on program-specific and general study contents (please refer to page 7 for the details about the calculation of self-study hours), constitute an important part of serious academic analyses, the experts recommend the University to review the currently applied credit system. Suggestions and recommendations on how to organize the credit award system are presented for example in the "ECTS Users' Guide"⁷. These regulations must be observed by all European universities. From the experts' point of view, adoption of the European system of grading could facilitate the direct recognition of students' study performance and accomplishments in case of transfer from one university into another and also in case of international student exchange programs.

Furthermore, the experts encourage the program management to arrange the offered courses in terms of larger modules with a standardized credit value, when one credit is equal to a set amount of workload hours. Such a design of

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/docs/ects-guide_en.pdf

the program would enable students to arrange their study plan in a self-contained manner. According to the "ECTS Users' Guide", the introduction of standardized modules with the defined amount of credits and workload hours enables students to correlate the exchange studies accomplished in different universities and also to obtain credits for specialty-related courses offered by other departments within the same university (for details, see the "ECTS User's Guide", section 4.1).

(3) Staff

During the on-site visit, the experts observed that the teaching staff of Najran University has revealed a clear commitment to the implementation and further improvement of the education process in the program they are responsible for.

The teaching staff of the study program "Nursing" consists of 25 members, of whom 16 (64%) are employed on a full-time and 9 (36%) on a part-time basis. Among the full-time teaching staff, there are 2 associate professors, 3 assistant professors and 2 lecturers. Among the part-time teaching staff, there are 2 assistant professors, 6 lecturers and 1 teaching assistant. Besides, there is one demonstrator, 2 physicians, and 6 clinical instructors (trainers). The technical-administrative staff consists of one supervisor of nursing skill laboratories and 3 coordinators for academic, student, and staff affairs.

The enrolment capacity of the program is 30 places; admission is each semester. The total number of students in case of full enrolment is 240 students. Thus, the expected student-teacher ratio is approximately 12:1, which means that there are 12 students per full-time teacher (with two part-time teachers taken as one full-time teacher). However, in correspondence with the statistics provided for the academic year 2012/2013, 192 students are enrolled in the study program. Hence, the actual student-teacher ratio is lower.

Employment of the teaching personnel for the study program is determined by the rules of the Higher Education Council of Saudi Arabia. Prior to taking the decision about the appointment to the position, the University verifies the information regarding the references, experience and qualifications provided by an applicant. New employees are thoroughly briefed about the program and their teaching responsibilities. The experts observed that the teaching staff involved in study programs reveals a high level of competence in the relevant field of health care and medical studies.

Students regularly evaluate the performance of the teaching staff of the study program.

To conclude, members of the teaching staff are appropriately qualified and experienced to perform their responsibilities in the program "Nursing". Teaching strategies are used in accordance with the intended learning outcomes. Furthermore, teachers are encouraged to participate in activities focused on the improvement of their teaching methods and techniques.

However, the fact that members of the teaching staff are employed on the basis of extremely short-term contracts is regarded critically by the experts. Such yearly contracts reveal the position of the instructors at the University as uncertain and unstable. In such circumstances, the questions of the current or the next employment might become too urgent and distractive for the teachers. Consequently, this situation can potentially hamper the realization of long-term sustainable projects and developments since they require a certain period of time for preparations and the actual implementation. The experts are aware that the described conditions are determined by the Saudi-Arabian governmental requirements and national legal regulations. Nevertheless, the University should elaborate whether the introduction of long-term contracts could be more useful. As an example, the length of a teaching contract can be determined based on the criterion of belongingness to the University.

To enable continuous professional growth and academic development of the teaching staff, the experts recommend the University to introduce new master's degree study programs, as it has already been mentioned under Criterion 1. By offering advanced study programs, the University could develop its own system of continuous life-long education for employees and thus prepare new teaching forces for further realization of bachelor and master programs and, at the same time, attract applicants from other Saudi universities wishing to continue their academic career within the country. Given the fact that master study programs focus on academic research and scientific projects, the University should consider them as an opportunity to extend its' scientific material produced by its own current and former students.

Furthermore, the experts encourage the University to provide a sufficient number of workshops, exchange opportunities to visit other higher education institutions, and scholarships for research activities and continuous study programs within and outside of the country. Hereby, the experts discussed

and positively evaluated the idea to establish a “life-long-learning Institute” as a part of the University.

The expert group concludes that the requirements of the criterion are met in full.

(4) Facilities and learning resources

The campus area of Najran University is considered to be the largest in Saudi Arabia. During the on-site visit, the experts have visited the newly occupied premises of the male campus. By relocating its units to the new campus, the University is striving to accommodate the rapidly growing number of students in Najran region. Female students are also expected to move to the new campus within the next few months after the building works are completed.

Currently, the university includes campuses for males and females, consisting of 15 and 10 colleges, respectively. The university encompasses a medical center, research center, sport and entertainment facilities, and it provides accommodation for the teaching staff and students. For the coming years, there is a plan to found the so-called ‘investment city’, which will incorporate commercial units, private schools, hotels and other objects, and which will serve as the foundation trust for the University.

The experts have been impressed by the large dimensions of the current construction projects.

There are sufficient classrooms throughout the university campus to conduct courses for groups of students of different sizes. The University Central Library provides students with a large amount of learning material and literary resources as well as with a sufficient number of computers, printers, scanners, copiers and other technical equipment. It must be emphasized that only male students have direct access to the central library. Female students can order the necessary learning material through the electronic library system. During the discussions with students, they evaluated the described access opportunities as sufficient.

In the course of the on-site visit, the expert group had the opportunity to observe and evaluate the learning and training premises of the College of Nursing. The College spans over 3 buildings hosting administrative offices, teaching staff premises, 7 lecture and seminar halls with the capacity of 30 seats, 6

subject and 4 skill laboratories, and the College library. The College library offers over 1,200 books in nursing and other related sciences, which are available during the opening hours from 8:00 till 14:00 from Sunday to Thursday, 5 days a week. Lecture rooms are supplied with Laboratory equipment.

From the experts' point of view, the learning resource materials and associated services are consistent with the requirements of the programs and the courses offered by them.

Both students and the teaching staff take part in the evaluation of learning material used in theoretical and practical classes. Course instructors are responsible for the due preparation of the equipment before the beginning of each semester. It is emphasized that the "Nursing" program is financed exclusively by the University, whereas the library funds of the Nursing College constitute a part of the University's centralized system.

According to the experts' conclusions, the University provides an appropriate amount of theoretical and practical learning material, general study and the program-specific equipment, learning resources, including literary material available in both libraries.

With regard to the support of students with disabilities, the experts witnessed that the building entries of the new University campus, as well as the laboratories and lecture halls, are designed for people with movement restrictions. Furthermore, there are special parking places for students with disabilities.

The acquisition of new equipment is a centralized procedure and is monitored by the central policy of the University.

The experts have concluded that the available facilities and the equipment comply with the standards of high quality as well as health and safety requirements. Management and administration of facilities, equipment and associated services are efficient and ensures maximum effective utilization of facilities provided.

To conclude, the "Nursing" program is implemented with the help of suitable and sufficiently provided material and facilities, which complies with the objectives and learning methods applied in the given specialization. The use of facilities and equipment is monitored as part of the quality assurance of the program.

The expert group concludes that the requirements of the criteria are met in full.

(5) Study process and student assessment

The study program "Nursing" is offered by the respective College of Najran University.

The study process of the program is administered and carried out according to the general *List of Regulations* of the University. These regulations apply for admission and registration procedures, grading system, structure and organization of semesters, transfer opportunities, postponement and suspension actions, re-enrollment and graduation requirements, examination system, conditions for visiting courses at another university, methods of internal and external quality assurance, learning methods and learning resources.

The decision making structures in the program are the Program Council, the Dean, the College Council and other bodies functioning on higher institutional level⁸.

The program "Nursing" is offered for female students only. The University claims that there is an urgent need for female nurses in Saudi Arabia. The experts concluded that the fact, that there are only female students in the program, is determined by cultural aspects of the country. Nevertheless, as the University underlines, the College of Nursing has been included into in the new male campus of the University and the drafts of the new male and female campuses have already been set up by the time of the on-site visit.

In order to be enrolled into the study program "Nursing", applicants have to provide their Saudi Arabian Secondary School Certificate (science section) or its equivalent and the results of the Aptitude Exam (provided by the National Centre for Assessment in Higher Education). The priority of acceptance is given to the applicants with the highest equivalent percentage (60% of the secondary school grade + 40% of the Aptitude Exam grade). Besides, applicants must have graduated school not longer than two years ago, be physically fit and in case of employment submit the approval of the employer.

⁸ Please see the organizational structure of the study program at <https://portal.nu.edu.sa/en/web/nursing-college/94>, and the organizational structure of the College of Nursing at <https://portal.nu.edu.sa/en/web/nursing-college/83> (31.08.2015)

The experts have expressed their concern regarding the situation of students with disabilities or chronic illnesses because 'being fit' is one of the main admission requirements of the University. Since it can become a very important issue and even a hindrance for some applicants on their way to receive higher education, the experts strongly recommend the University to give a clear definition and describe its criteria for 'physical fitness' in a transparent manner. This means that the relevant information should be publicly available, for instance through the official website of the University.

Students of the University receive support during their studies as well as the internship period from the teaching staff of the College, program coordinators and hospital supervisors. Each member of the teaching staff is assigned 30-35 students in order to provide them with academic guidance, which includes the explanation of the College regulations, the system of workload distribution and course structuring etc. Students of the program can have individual counselling appointments with teachers during specific office hours. As a rule, one hospital supervisor is assigned to a maximum of 15 trainees. The College of Nursing has a specific set of requirements for the hospital supervisors monitoring students' performance during the specialization training. Finally, there is an annual orientation week organized in the program for the first year students.

Examinations taken in the study program follow the regulations of the University, which define when students are permitted to examinations, what additional material (e.g. bilingual dictionaries, pocket calculators) they may use and what time requirements they have to fulfil. Among the assessment methods used in the study program, the University names seminars and discussions, assessment of group assignments, homework, essays, presentations, practical sessions and other. Assessment methods are further categorized into first quizzes (5% of the final grade for the semester), mid-term theory exams (20%), mid-term practical exams (10%), participation (15%), final theoretical exams (30%) and final practical exams (20%)⁹.

According to further regulations, students who missed more than 25% of the course lectures are not allowed to take final exams. If students were absent due to health or other acceptable reasons, they can take an alternative exami-

⁹ For details see the "Nursing" program manual on the website of the College: <https://portal.nu.edu.sa/en/web/nursing-college/165> (31.08.2015)

nation. In case students fail to succeed in completing requirements of a particular course, they have to repeat the course along with the courses of the next semester.

The grading system applied in the study programs complies with the academic requirements of the University. Nevertheless, the experts recommend - as written under Criterion 2 - to review the implementation of the current credit system so that it will show the complete study process of students, including their self-study time.

In the course of the on-site visit, the experts witnessed the vivid dedication with which teachers and students are involved in the realization of the program objectives. The experts described the University as a higher education body with great potential and unique character striving towards academic growth and qualitative improvement of teaching and learning processes.

The College applies a clear system of measures for the evaluation of study processes by current students, graduates and employed students as well as by actual and prospective employers. Results of these questionnaires are analyzed and applied for issuing the development plan for the coming academic year. The College of Nursing has a Student Committee and an Advisory Board, with the help of which the program management communicates the information about evaluation results and improvement plans to all stakeholders, including students¹⁰.

In this regard, experts recommend the University as a whole to ensure that the evaluation results are made available to all stakeholders, including students. The obtained information can be communicated to students in the form of numerical calculations and statistical charts. By doing so, the University could guarantee transparency and effectiveness of quality assurance procedures implemented within the program as well as within the University in general. Furthermore, such a feedback could motivate students to take a more active part in the improvement of the program.

The system of students support is maintained by the program management on a high level. Similarly, the examination system of the study program is suitable

¹⁰ Please see the structure of the students committee (<https://portal.nu.edu.sa/en/web/nursing-college/160>) and of the advisory board (<https://portal.nu.edu.sa/en/web/nursing-college/161>) on the website of the College (31.08.2015).

ble and effective for the evaluation of students' achievement in the courses. Students' rights and actions in examinations and transfer procedures are well described in the University *List of Regulations*. The teaching staff of the College provides objective evaluation of students' performance by means of a number of evaluation methods.

The College assures to provide equal rights and opportunities, as well as similar equipment and learning material resources, for both female and male students. Currently the program has only female students.

The expert group concludes that the requirements of the criteria are met in full. However, the experts point out that the University should specify its requirements and selection criteria implied under the aspect of 'physical fitness' and properly communicate the results of quality evaluation questionnaires to all stakeholders, including students.

(6) Program management and quality assurance

Najran University implements a set of internal quality assurance procedures, which involve both students and teachers. The Dean of Development and Quality is responsible for the execution of strategic development plans on the level of colleges/ departments and their programs. The Dean and its units ensure technical support of the study processes and arrange different activities and workshops to increase professional performance and quality awareness of the teaching staff. Furthermore, the University emphasizes its reliance upon the standards and the recommendations of the Saudi-Arabian National Commission for Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA).

The College of Nursing has its own Development and Quality Unit, which was established in 2010 following the administration decision of the Deputy Rector for Development and Quality¹¹.

At the end of each semester, the program coordinator submits a report for the discussion of program development and improvements with the College Council. The Development and Quality Unit studies, analyses and summarizes the obtained results, which are then submitted to the Dean of the College. Besides, the Development and Quality Unit issues an annual plan of improvement

¹¹ Please see the full list of duties of the quality unit of the College of Nursing: <https://portal.nu.edu.sa/en/web/nursing-college/147> (31.08.2015)

of the college; it monitors the execution of the plan and submits follow-up reports to the Deanship of Development and Quality.

The teaching process is evaluated in the College of Nursing by means of student questionnaires, review of teachers' portfolios and the overall assessment of their academic achievement. The program's relevance to the professional practice is monitored through continuous communication with graduates and the activity of the Advisory Board, which consists of representatives from professional practice and future employers. Finally, the program implements periodical questionnaires for graduates and for current as well as prospective employers.

Program students are required to complete course evaluation questionnaires at the end of each semester. In the final year of studies, students are asked to evaluate the program learning facilities and services that had been offered in the course of studies. Students of the program confirmed that they are actively involved in the described quality assurance processes.

The University ensures academic feasibility of the evaluation methods by means of continuous monitoring of the intended and achieved learning outcomes with the help of students' feedback and program coordinators' reports.

Based on the observations during the on-site visit, the experts concluded that the quality assurance concept of the University relies on continuous and evidence-based evaluation of performance. The quality assurance processes are carried out in the form of written evaluations, discussions held by the teaching staff and students. It is noteworthy that the University strives to apply internal as well as external standards and requirements of quality evaluation; the latter is implemented through the involvement of external evaluators such as prospective employers of graduate students and academic experts from other countries. The College of Nursing issues annual reports according to the templates of the NCAAA, which include information and data about the achievements, shortcomings and improvement within the study program¹².

The credit system of the University takes into account only contact hours, although students' self-study time is equally valuable in higher education programs. Therefore, the experts underline that the rationality of the program

¹² Visit the website of the College to see the sample of the Program Annual Report: <http://portal.nu.edu.sa/en/web/nursing-college/165> (31.08.2015)

study workload should be determined based on all activities performed by students, which includes not only regulated theoretical classes, practical sessions and the internship period, but also students' investment time of independent studies and preparation for examinations. The College of Nursing should therefore continuously review and ensure the sufficiency of the self-study hours, and it should also involve students into the assessment of the workload hours necessary for individual studies.

Teaching and other staff involved in the program must regularly evaluate and document their own performance and be personally committed to improving both their own performance and the quality of the program as a whole. Regular evaluations of quality are undertaken within each course based on valid evidence, relevant performance indicators, and appropriate benchmarks; subsequent plans for improvement are made and implemented. Central importance is given to student learning outcomes with each course contributing to the achievement of the overall program objectives.

The University determines a set of regulations for students transferring from other universities. Thus, students should not have any record of dismissal from their previous university; they have to complete not less than 60% of the total program requirements at Najran University in order to graduate from it. The College council decides about the recognition of previous studies and the amount of credits they are equal to. In order to transfer from one college to another within Najran University, students must provide a Grade Point Average not less than 2.00 and have no previous record of transfer.

Information about the program, its admission requirements and other details relevant to the program are available on the website of the University. Students evaluated the information provision measures and information resources of the University as sufficient and adequate. Academic counselling and career advice in the given field of study are offered. The website of the College contains information about the offered study programs, their mission, goals, organizational structure, study plan, training plan, internship organization and other details.

Practical relevance of the study program "Nursing" is confirmed by the fact that there is a high demand for professionals in this sphere within Saudi Arabia. Employment opportunities of the program graduates are claimed to be

very good, which is determined through questionnaires and regular meeting with current and prospective employers.

The University strives to supply the teaching staff and students with sufficient research equipment and material, as well as financial support. Members of the College teaching staff are actively involved in various scholarly activities to ensure that they remain up to date with developments in their respective field and that these developments are reflected in their work. Achievements in research and publication in respective periodicals play an important role for promotion of teachers to a higher academic position within the University.

As a recommendation for further enhancement of research activities, the experts emphasize that primarily teachers themselves should actively encourage and trigger bachelor students' interest in scholarly work. Course teachers can do so, for instance by involving students in their own projects, practical experiments or social initiatives.

Moreover, the recommendation to introduce scientific and educational oriented master programs could have a positive influence on the future development of research activities and recruitment of qualified staff.

The expert group concludes that the requirements of the criteria are met in full.

3.4 Summary

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 "Nursing" offered at Najran University, Saudi Arabia, fulfills the above described and evaluated criteria.

The expert group emphasizes that the program reveals a great potential to educate and train future nursing specialists who can successfully find employment in a number of health care institutions. Moreover, the program offers its graduates opportunities to continue their academic career within the country and also abroad.

The qualification objectives, the design and the structure of the study program, admission requirements, quality assurance procedures and evaluation methods in particular have been the focus of the accreditation procedure.

Aspects related to quality management, as well as the learning resources, facilities and staff have been discussed.

The study program "Nursing" responds to the needs of the labor market situation in the Kingdom of Saudi-Arabia and especially in Najran region witnessing a significant increase of population. The experts agreed that the reasons for the establishment of the study program are clear and well-founded. The study curriculum and course content comply with the overall objectives of the study program. The facilities are new and of high quality. For further development the experts recommend to develop the program not only with a view on the regional or national labor market, but to think globally to further integrate the ambulatory care aspects into the program for example in the form of Community Health Nursing or Public Health.

The program complies with the overall mission of the University to contribute to the improvement of the national health care system and to enhance the education opportunities of younger generations.

The continuously growing number of local students creates various challenges for the University, in terms of additional learning resources and study premises. Therefore, the University is striving to respond to these needs by establishing new campuses for male and female students.

Taking these facts into consideration, the experts have come to the conclusion that they will submit a recommendation to the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS for a positive decision regarding the accreditation of the study program "Nursing".

The members of the expert group have, at the same time, outlined a number of recommendations and suggestions, which they believe to reinforce the educative potential of the program:

- The University should work in two directions: one is to encourage professional growth and enable further scientific engagement for the teaching staff, and the other is to offer continuous academic study opportunities for students. This can be achieved through the introduction of master level study programs, which will help the University to enhance its output of scientific work, thus increasing its competitiveness in the field of health care education. Furthermore, by offering advanced studies, the University can

create a continuous life-long learning environment for its academic teaching forces and students.

- The Program of Nursing and the University in general, should establish closer and more interactive contacts with other higher education institutions within and outside of Saudi Arabia. This includes student exchange opportunities, exchange of teaching experience through visiting professors, organization of conferences, workshops, and discussions among students and teachers from partner universities. By means of such actions, the University can contribute to the solidification of university networking on the national level.
- The experts recommend the program of Nursing and the University in general, to continuously review the currently applied credit system in terms of:
 - a) the self-study time dedicated to program-specific and general study content, which according to the European perspective constitute an important part of the higher education process and is therefore included to the total amount of working hours and credits allocated in a study program. The program should include students into the process of assessment and determination of the necessary amount of self-study hours.
 - b) the arrangement of the program courses within larger modules with a set amount of credit value and workload hours, which enables students to correlate the exchange studies accomplished in different universities and also to obtain credits for specialization-related courses offered by other departments within the same university.

Suggestions and recommendations on how to organize the credit award system are presented for example in the "ECTS Users' Guide".

- The University should consider the employment of the teaching staff based on long-term contracts. The length of a contract might be, for instance, determined by the criterion of belongingness to the University. The advantage of such a system is that it could enable the realization of continuous and long-lasting projects and scientific experiences, which require a certain period of time for preparation, implementation and subsequent analyses.
- With regard to the admission procedure, the University should specify its requirements and selection criteria implied under the aspect of 'physical fit-

ness'. The relevant information should be publicly available, for instance through the official website of the University.

- As a recommendation for further enhancement of research activities, the experts emphasize that primarily teachers themselves should actively encourage and trigger bachelor students' interest in scholarly work. Course teachers can do so, for instance by involving students in their own projects, practical experiments or social initiatives.
- The University should ensure that the results of evaluation questionnaires completed by students are properly communicated to all stakeholders, including students. By doing so, the University could guarantee transparency and effectiveness of quality assurance procedures implemented in the program as well as within the University in general.

4 Decision of the accreditation commission

Najran University, Najran, Kingdom of Saudi-Arabia, Bachelor Program “Nursing”

The resolution of the Accreditation Commission is based on the University's application, as well as the expert review and the on-site visit covered in the expert report. Moreover, the Accreditation Commission takes into account the response opinion regarding the study program. The on-site visit occurred on February 23 and 24, 2015 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 Bachelor study program “Nursing” is completed with awarding of the academic degree “Bachelor of Nursing”.

The regulated study period in the program “Nursing” is five years: eight semesters at the University followed by a one-year internship. The study program “Nursing” comprises 42 courses taught during eight semesters. There are no optional or elective courses, all courses are compulsory, they have to be completed within eight semesters before the internship year starts.

The AHPGS Accreditation Commission considers that all Accreditation Criteria are fulfilled. The AHPGS Accreditation Commission accredits the study program “Nursing” for the duration of five years, until September 30, 2020.

For further development and enhancement of the study program and the University as a whole, the AHPGS Accreditation Commission recommends taking the study program specific recommendations as well as the overarching recommendations described in the summary of the Expert Report, into consideration.