

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



Assessment Report

for the application of

Najran University,

College of Applied Medical Sciences

for the accreditation of the Bachelor Study Program

“Physiotherapy”

(Bachelor of Applied Medical Sciences in Physiotherapy)

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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 expert 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 a Bachelor study program "Physiotherapy". The application documentation submitted by Najran University follows the outline recommended by the AHPGS. Along with the application request for accreditation of the 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 "Physiotherapy" 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 Applied Medical Sciences
Title of the study program	"Physiotherapy "
Degree awarded	Bachelor of Applied Medical Sciences in Physiotherapy
Working language	English (except for Arabic and Islamic courses)
Students' gender	Male only
Form of studies	Full-time
Organizational structure	Sunday – Thursday, 8:00 – 15:00
Period of education	9 semesters (2 semesters in a preparatory year, 7 semesters of main studies, and 1 semester of an internship)
Credit Points (CP) according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)	The program requires 153 credit points
Credit hour	1 credit hour = 1 contact hour of a theoretical course; = 2 contact hours of a practical course (lab training); = 2 contact hours of hospital training (self-study hours are not included)
Total workload in hours	3,825 hours + 960 hours for internship
Workload distribution	Total: 4,785 hours Contact hours: 3,045 hours Individual work: 780 hours Practice: 960 hours
CP for the final paper	Not applicable
Beginning of the study program	2006
First accreditation	Not applicable
Time of admission	Each semester

Number of available places on the program	40
Number of enrolled students up to now	137
Number of graduates up to now	31
Particular enrollment conditions	Saudi Arabian Secondary School Certificate (science section) or its equivalent; Aptitude Exam (provided by National Centre for Assessment in Higher Education)
Tuition fees	Not applicable (cf. Question 11 in the AOQ)

Table 2: Structural Data of "Physiotherapy" Study Program

The study program "Physiotherapy" comprises 9 semesters that are structured according to three phases:

- Phase I- Preparatory year (2 semesters),
- Phase II- Physiotherapy courses (7 semesters), and
- Phase III- Internship period (6 months).

During the preparatory year, students master their English, acquire necessary computer skills, and develop general learning, thinking, and research techniques. Further, the students build their theoretical, practical, and ethical knowledge in the field of physiotherapy studies. Within next 7 semesters all program-specific and supportive science courses are taught. Moreover, beginning with the sixth semester students are expected to take part in Clinical Practice lessons under hospital supervision. The final compulsory internship period assures that graduates have the necessary knowledge, attitude and competency to perform the essential, common technical and administrative physiotherapeutic skills (see Annex 3).

2.2.2 Qualification objectives and employment opportunities

According to the University, the program is designed to prepare specialists with critical and reflective understanding of relationships between theory and practice in the field of Physiotherapy. Graduates of the program have to be able to recognize the basic medical, behavioral, and social aspects related to their professional practice. From the perspective of cognitive skills, students are expected to be able to design and apply treatment plans according to

patients' requirements, and explain physiotherapeutic interventions and procedures based on their professional practice.

The program "Physiotherapy" aims at preparing its students for the future professional occupation by developing also their interpersonal, communication, and psychomotor skills. On the level of interpersonal relations and communication, graduates are trained to demonstrate professional behavior in all interactions with co-workers, patients/clients, and their families. As for psychomotor techniques, they ensure student's capability to conduct an independent practice in laboratories and work places. Last but not least, as one of its main aims the program regards educating specialists that could perform and manage a plan of care that is consistent with legal, ethical, and professional obligations as well as with administrative policies and procedures of the working environment (see Application A2.1).

Among the reasons for the introduction of the study program "Physiotherapy" the University names high population growth and the consequently increasing demand for physiotherapeutic services. Furthermore, it is claimed that the low percentage of local physiotherapists in Saudi Arabia remains a very important pressure factor; the program is, therefore, committed to educating more specialists to cover this shortage all over the country. Furthermore, the University claims that Najran also experiences a great lack of physiotherapists. For this reason, Najran University is motivated to train local specialists to serve the community (see Application A2.4).

Considering the employment opportunities, the University states that graduates can work as physiotherapists in public and private hospitals, community health centers and agencies, rehabilitation units, or in pre-school and school programs. Moreover, they can find employment as specialists in such specific areas as sports physiotherapy, manipulative physiotherapy, pediatrics, obstetrics, orthopedics or other. Alternatively, graduates of the program are also qualified for the positions of researchers or consultants in educational, industrial or government institutions (see Application A3.1).

According to the University, upon completion of the program, students will be entitled for applying to the Saudi Arabian Commission for Health Specialists (SCFHS) to be a licensee as Physical Therapist accordingly to the strategic plan of Ministry of Health (2010-2019). It is stated that in the region of Najran there is a great demand for physical therapists. As the survey shows, all 36

graduates in the academic year 2012 and 12 graduates in the year 2013 found employment (see Application A3.2).

2.2.3 Structure of the study program and exam system

According to the documents provided by the University, the “Physiotherapy” Bachelor study program comprises 64 courses out of which 12 are attended during the first preparatory phase and 52—during the main phase of studies, plus a six-month internship period at the end of the study program. There are no optional or elective courses, all courses are compulsory. All courses have to be completed before the internship year starts.

The total workload of the program “Physiotherapy” equals to 3,825 credit hours which corresponds to 153 credits. The total amount of work-load is determined by calculating the net contact time spent during classes, laboratory hours and in a formal teaching environment excluding the individual study time of students.

Phase I. A preparatory year includes courses that are envisaged to improve students’ English language skills and help them build scientific, ethical, and cultural background for the following introduction into the field of physiotherapy.

Semester	Course Title	Credit Hours/week	Attendance hours/week
1	English Language: Reading skills	2	2
	English Language: Writing skills	2	2
	English Language: Listening and Conversation Skills	2	2
	English Language: Grammars	2	2
	Introduction To Mathematics	2	3
	Ideation and Thinking Skills	2	2
	Computer Skills	3	
2	General English Language	3	3
	Writing Reports	2	2
	Professional Ethics	1	1
	Communication Skills	2	2
	Algebraic Sciences	4	4
Total:		27	27

Table 3: Overview of Preparatory Year Courses

Phase II. Physiotherapy courses include courses that offer deep insight into the professional field and prepare students for the practical application of the acquired knowledge and skills. The 52 program courses of Study Phase II are worth of 126 credit hours.

Semester	Course Title	Credit hours/week	Attendance hours/week
3	Human Anatomy (Limbs)	2	4
	Human Physiology	2	3
	Introduction to Biochemistry	1	3
	Introduction to Physics	2	1
	Arab Writing Skills1	2	2
	Computer Application for Health Sciences	2	3
	Biostatistics	2	2
	Islamic Culture 1	2	2
	Basic Histology	3	3
Total:		18	23
4	Neuroanatomy	3	4
	Islamic Culture 2	2	2
	Biochemistry	2	3
	Neurophysiology	3	4
	Electrotherapy 1	2	3
	Test and Measurements	3	4
	Biomechanics and Kinesiology 1	3	4
Total:		18	24
5	Thorax and Abdomen Anatomy	3	4
	Principles of Exercise Physiology	2	2
	Therapeutic Exercises	2	3
	Electrotherapy 2	3	4
	Hydrotherapy	2	3
	Biomechanics and Kinesiology 2	3	4
	Medical physics	1	1
	Islamic Culture 3	2	2
Total:		18	23
6	Principles of Musculoskeletal Disorders and it's Surgery	2	2
	Physiotherapy of Musculoskeletal Disorders and Its Surgery (Limbs and Spine)	4	6

	Rehabilitation for Sports Injuries	2	3
	Prosthetics and Orthotics	2	3
	Clinical Practice 1	4	8
	Pathology	2	2
	Islamic Culture 4	2	2
Total:		18	26
7	Principles of Cardiac Disorders and its Surgery	2	2
	Physiotherapy for Cardiac Disorders and Its Surgery	4	4
	Principles of Internal Medicine and Geriatric Diseases	2	2
	Physiotherapy for Internal Medicine and Geriatric Diseases	2	6
	Pulmonary Rehabilitation	4	4
	Clinical Practice 2	4	8
Total:		18	26
8	Principles of Neuromuscular Disorders and Its Surgery	2	2
	Physiotherapy for Neuromuscular Disorders and Its Surgery	4	6
	Psychology	1	1
	Arab writing Skills 2	2	2
	Clinical Practice 3	4	8
	Evidence-Based Practice	2	3
	Pharmacology	1	1
	Research Methodology 1	2	3
Total:		18	26
9	Principles of Pediatrics Disorders and its Surgery	2	2
	Physiotherapy for Pediatric Disorders and its Surgery	4	6
	Burn Rehabilitation	2	3
	Clinical Practice 4	4	8
	Principles of Occupational Therapy	2	3
	Research Methodology 2	2	3
	Radiology	2	3
Total:		18	28
Total attendance hours for Physiotherapy courses		126	176
Total credit hours for the whole program		153	203

Table 4: Overview of the Physiotherapy courses

Phase III. Internship Period is intended to give students an opportunity to integrate into the future career and gain experience in individual as well as group work in authentic hospital environment. The students have to complete all academic requirements to be qualified for the internship. The graduates are awarded with the title Bachelor of Applied Medical Sciences in Physiotherapy after successful completion of all clinical rotations of the internship period.

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 assessment. Moreover, Attachment A1 of the Application presents correlation between study-program objectives (see Paragraph 2.2.2) and corresponding courses, applied teaching methods, and assessment techniques. Only in their preparatory year and further at the *Islamic Culture* and *Arabic Language* courses do the students of the "Physiotherapy" Bachelor program attend classes with other students of the College of Applied Medicine (see AOO, Question 7).

The study program applies different strategies and methods of teaching, such as lectures, tutorials, small group discussions, practical sessions, case studies and assignments (see Application A1.16). Although distance learning is not possible at the "Physiotherapy" program, Najran University has launched E-learning on its website. The learning platform of the study program includes audio-visual displays. The University has also launched E-learning on its website. Besides, a six-month internship in one of the public general or specialized hospitals offers the soon-to-be graduates a whole range of learning situations.

As for the international aspects of the curriculum, the program seeks to achieve the international standards of the study field. Out of 52 Physiotherapy courses, 46 (88%) are taught in English and 6 (12%) in Arabic. It is claimed that graduates with the highest rates join international universities to complete their postgraduate studies. At the moment the study program cannot offer a student exchange with other universities or studies abroad as there is no collaboration with other Higher Education Institutions. However, possibilities for establishing cooperation with national and international peer programs are considered (see Application A1.15).

The University and the College claim to provide students with support and guidance in terms of internship placement. First of all, there are four practical

training courses that are then followed by a 6-month internship period. Hospitals that are chosen as training settings have to meet the objectives of the internship program. Throughout the whole period students' progress is administered, regulated, and evaluated by an internship coordinator from the University as well as by an external clinical supervisor (see Application A1.18). To be more precise, the academic supervisor is responsible for registering fresh graduate students, establishing contacts with the external professional staff, controlling the implementation of relevant administrative laws and regulations, and reviewing any obstacles that can affect the training process.

The correlation of the practical content with the intended objectives of the study program is ensured by the fact that the interns' performance is assessed according to the criteria set by the Department of Medical Rehabilitation Sciences. As for the methods of quality assurance, each student's log book, containing his or her results, is evaluated by the academic and external clinical supervisors. Besides, all supervisors are required to deliver a Field Experience Report (FER) to the Department coordinator by the end of each semester.

The program envisages integration of research into the course of studies through the following courses in the third, eighth, and ninth semesters: *Bio-statistical Analysis*, *Evidence-Based Practice*, *Research Methodology 1* and *Research Methodology 2*. After their completion, students are expected to be able to conduct an elementary scientific research. However, no graduation project or research work is provided for at the end of the studies (see AOO, Question 20).

Although the College of Applied Medical Sciences does not organize its own student conferences, the College participates semiannually in the Regional Scientific Conference which is supported by the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Higher Education. Question 13 of the AOO presents a list of students of the College of Applied Medical Sciences, titles of their reports and scientific conferences they have partaken in. The University intends to encourage interest in research studies among its students and enable them to apply scientific research in the clinical settings. Moreover, the given courses are seen as the opportunity to apply the faculty members' research papers for academic educational purposes (see Application A1.19).

Concerning the methods of examination applied in the program, they include quizzes, assignments, written exams, practical exams, and objective structured clinical exams. The examination schedule is planned at the beginning of each semester according to the study calendar of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (see Application A1.13):

Examination	Time
Mid-term exams (written, oral, and practical)	(at the end of the 7 th week)
Final exams (written, oral, and practical)	(at the end of the 16 th week)

Table 5: Assessment Schedule for “Physiotherapy” Bachelor Program

There is no re-examination specific schedule; in some extraordinary cases, for instance, sickness or other emergency cases approved by the university system and regulations, re-examination is planned accordingly (see Annex 4). Academic feasibility of the evaluation methods is ensured through continuous monitoring of the intended and achieved learning outcomes by means of students’ feedback, teachers’ observations and feedback, program coordinator reports, field experience and constant program reports (see Application A1.13).

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 4 Section A, Paragraph 8).

Najran University applies the following grading system:

Percentage	Evaluation	Letter Grade	Grade Point Average
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 6: Grading System at Najran University

For each course the students of Najran University receive a final grade in the form of a percentage or an alphabetical letter. A temporary assigned incomplete grade (IC) appears in the transcript for courses not completed on time. In case of continuous evaluation for courses that last more than one semester, a cumulative grade is awarded upon completion of all units of the course (*see Annex 4*). The study program “Physiotherapy” does not apply Najran University’s provisions for recognition of credits transferred from other universities since it does not include any student exchange possibilities within or outside the country.

Regarding the compensatory measures for students with disabilities or chronic illnesses, no such regulation is provided for the “Physiotherapy” Bachelor program as one of the main admission conditions set by the University is that applicants shall be physically and medically fit (see Application A4.1).

2.2.4. Admission requirements

Admission requirements for the “Physiotherapy” 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 (70% of the secondary school grade + 30% of Aptitude Exam grade). To be accepted to Najran University an applicant is to fulfil 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.

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 (see Annex 4).

2.3 Conditions of studies and quality assurance

2.3.1 Human resources

The teaching staff of the "Physiotherapy" Bachelor program comprises in total 50 members, out of which 14 (28%) are employed on a full-time basis and 36 (72%) on a part-time basis. Among the full-time teaching staff there are 6 assistant professors and 6 lecturers and 2 demonstrators. Among the part-time teaching staff there is 1 professor, 23 assistant professors, and 12 lecturers. Besides, the technical-administrative staff includes 1 demonstrator, 1 assistant, 1 secretary, and 1 director of Physiotherapy Clinics (Annexes 6 and 7).

The students of the program are expected to complete their studies at university in 9 semesters (4.5 years) followed by a six-month internship at a hospital. The full enrollment capacity of the program is 40 places; the admission is each semester. The total number of students in case of full enrolment is 360, which means the expected student-teacher ratio of approximately 12:1, i.e. 12 students per 1 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, 137 students were admitted. Hence, the real student-teacher ratio can be relatively lower (see Application B1.2).

The technical-administrative staff consists of 4 employees: 1 assistant of physiotherapy department, 1 Director, and 1 Secretary all employed at the Physiotherapy Clinics, and also 1 demonstrator working at the Physiotherapy

Department. For the scope of professorial instruction in the study program, refer to Section B of the Application or Annex 7.

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 of Science 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 by 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 "Physiotherapy" 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.

Paragraph B1.5 of the Application states that 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.

2.3.2 Material and space resources

According to the information from the University, Najran University is subsidized by the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Higher Education (see Application B3.4).

Recently, the program “Physiotherapy” has been moved to the new University campus. The new premises are claimed to meet the requirements for lighting, air conditioning systems, and health and safety conditions. The current teaching facilities include study rooms and laboratories. There are security systems to ensure safety for researchers and their activities. The “Physiotherapy” study program has at its disposal 5 lecture halls with a capacity of 30-40 students each equipped with overhead projector, whiteboard, and air-conditioning. There is one seminar room for 15 places provided with the Internet connection. Since the College of Applied Medical Sciences has moved to a new building, now there are 10 laboratories: 1 lab for motion analyses, 1 lab for occupational therapy, 1 lab for hydrotherapy unit, 1 hydrotherapy lab, 1 lab for therapeutic exercises, 1 electrotherapy lab, 1 cardiopulmonary lab, 1 lab for pediatric treatment unit, 1 neurophysiology lab, and 1 lab for orthotics and prosthetics.

There is no specialized library in the Department of Medical Rehabilitation Sciences, though the establishment of such is envisioned in the future. The Prince Meshaal library is a central library that serves the whole university. Students of the program can find the relevant learning material in the university library. The central library has 11,929 books and 52 periodicals, 28 computers, a printer, a xerographic copier, a scanner, Internet connection and data show at its disposal. The library is available either during the opening hours (from 7:30 to 14:30 from Sunday to Thursday), or via online access.

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. A 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 Applied Medical Sciences, 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 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.

For the "Physiotherapy" Bachelor study program, the overall evaluation of the program and its academic achievements is carried out on a regular basis every three months and at the end of each academic year (Application A5.1). A specially designed template for evaluation and monitoring is to be completed and returned to the Development and Quality Unit within a week of its receiving. The evaluation data is then studied analyzed and summarized. A report is submitted to the Dean of the College that includes a summary of the results of the evaluation and corrective actions are taken to improve weak areas. By the end of each semester the Program Coordinator is responsible for submitting a report for the discussion of program improvements by the program council (Application A1.12). Moreover, an external evaluator is appointed to review the program.

Evaluation of teaching is based on student questionnaires, review of teachers' portfolios and the overall assessment of academic achievement. Based on the 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 represent-

atives 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 (Application A5.4). From time to time, graduates and employees are also asked to fill in questionnaires on their practical experience.

The University claims to involve students in the internal quality assurance system of the study program by introducing them to the culture of quality assurance through brochures and quality guide. All students in the program take part in the evaluation of the courses they study and quality of teachers' instruction. Such tools as preservation maps and questionnaires are used to evaluate the quality of student learning and teaching. Moreover, the students of the program are also asked to take part in online student ratings.

As already stated, the "Physiotherapy" Bachelor study program was first launched in 2006; according to the statistics provided in the Application (see Paragraph A5.6), the largest number of enrolled students was in the winter semester 2006/2007 – 34 people, whereas the smallest number was in the summer semester of the same year – 7 students. The number of graduates of these two cohorts amounted to 18 and 3 people, respectively, in the academic year 2010/2011. Interestingly, the most noticeable difference between the applicants and the graduates was in the batch of 2007/2008: out of 26 people only 4 have finished the program in 2011/2012 (see Application A5.6). It is stressed that the program is designed for physically fit male 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 (where personal web pages of the academic staff can be found), in student guide handbook, and various brochures, banners and posters or by contacting the Program Coordinator per email, telephone or fax. The Program Coordinator also provides orientation for the students during their study in the preparatory year: the prospect students visit the Physiotherapy Department and get information about the program before they join it. Further, each student is assigned to a university academic guide that is expected to have regular meetings with their students. A student can also get support regarding practice or job placement from a professional

practice educator at placement centers or turn to a faculty placement officer for administrative support. The Application also briefly mentions policies for supporting underachieving students and honoring high-achievers (see Application A5.8). Each student can contact an academic/professional advisor per email or during their office hours. Student suggestions and complaints in the written form can be also dropped into a suggestion box.

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 AQQ, 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 Wednesday. 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 Department of Medical Rehabilitation Sciences offers one study program which awards its graduates with the title "Bachelor of Medical Sciences in Physiotherapy".

Founded in the academic year 2006/2007, the College of Applied Medical Sciences consists of three departments (Radiological Sciences, Physiotherapy, and Medical Laboratories) and, therefore, offers three Bachelor study programs, one at each of the departments: "Bachelor of Medical Sciences in Radiological Sciences", "Bachelor of Medical Sciences in Physiotherapy", and "Bachelor of Medical Sciences in Clinical Laboratories". For a description of the College facilities, please refer to Subsection 2.3.2 *Material and space resources* of the present document. There are currently 137 male students enrolled in the "Physiotherapy" Bachelor study program. The enrolled students enjoy the same benefits as students of other study programs at Najran University, such as discounts in canteens and cafeterias, for transportation, extra-curriculum activities, etc.

In Section C of its Application, the University refers to the plans of current and further development. The university is keen to achieve better conditions by updating lighting, ventilation and air conditioning systems. Moreover, as already mentioned, the campuses will be further developed to contain accommodation, restaurants, stores and 24/7 campus security. New college buildings will house workplaces that will fully satisfy the needs of students and their professional development. New classrooms, laboratories, faculty, and administrative rooms will meet the requirements of university study programs. Regarding the College of Applied Medical Sciences, the University is finishing construction of a College building in a new male campus of the University City. The College building will include sport facilities (3 gyms as well as volleyball, basketball, and handball fields), a hall for leisure activities (billiards, table tennis, a table hockey game, etc.), a cafeteria, and a large green space (see AOO, Question 15).

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 AHPGS². The Accreditation Criteria have been 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, adequate staffing and facilities conditions, 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);

²http://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 outstanding issues 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 will be 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 Vosseler³

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

³ 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. The experts for the implementation of written review and the on-site visit at Najran University were officially nominated by the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS as mentioned above.

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 outstanding issues 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 representatives from the central office of the AHPGS.

The expert group met on February 22, 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 process 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 compre-

hensive manner as 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 and 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 admitted and 27 graduate students in the program "Nursing". Hence, the College of Nursing also witnesses a considerable increase of the enrollment rates.

(1) Program aims and learning outcomes

The objective of the study program "Physiotherapy" is to teach students to identify and evaluate the necessary treatment applications with the subsequent planning and implementation of them according to medical and physical problems of a patient. By the end of their studies, graduates must be able to perform a care procedure consistent with their professional, legal and ethical policies and obligations. Furthermore, graduates are expected to describe and implement different physical therapy methods and techniques depending on the requirements of a patient.

As for cognitive and interpersonal skills, the study program ensures that its students acquire professionally correct communication and behaviour patterns necessary in health care environment to establish contact with patients, colleagues and other medical care personnel. Besides, graduates are trained to use various technologies to illustrate the process and the outcome of medical treatments they perform. With regard to psychomotor skills, students are prepared to carry out independent practice with the correct application of medical equipment.

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. 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 must be able to provide safe, competent and efficient physical therapy according to the standard precautions. Finally, they are trained to perform professional work according to the principle of privacy and with respect to patients' rights.

The first preparatory year of the program is dedicated to the improvement of students' English language skills and learning methods. Moreover, students attend courses in Mathematics and professional ethics. Qualification competences are taught through the program-specific courses, which include "Electrotherapy", "Biomechanics and Kinesiology", "Hydrotherapy", "Prosthetics and Orthotics" and other. At the same time, the program envisages teaching of interdisciplinary skills in such courses as "Computer Applications in Health Sciences" and "Principles of Musculoskeletal Disorders and its Surgery". The research project in the fourth year of studies further adds to the list of academic abilities and skills developed in the program. The final internship period (6 months) 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.

From the expert's point of view, the program is consistent 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"⁴. Similar to other programs offered by the College of Applied Medical Sciences, the curriculum of the program "Physiotherapy" also 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.

The University emphasizes that the program "Physiotherapy" has been introduced in order to increase the number of physiotherapists in Saudi Arabia. The current lack of health care professionals is becoming more urgent given the

⁴ See the official website of the University: <http://portal.nu.edu.sa/en/university-mission> (10.04.2015)

fact that the population of the country is continuously growing, particularly in the region of Najran. Therefore, the University is strongly motivated to educate and train local specialists who will serve the community upon graduation.

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 for working in accordance with the cultural and ethical framework of local communities. Implementation of the objectives of the study program "Physiotherapy" 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 have been fully complied.

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 emphasize 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 to 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 colleagues 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 guest/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

The regular study period of the program "Physiotherapy" is 5 years: 9 semesters at the University followed by a 6-month internship in a hospital or other

medical institution. The study programs of the College of Applied Medical Sciences are structured according to three stages of education:

Phase I – preparatory year (2 semesters),

Phase II – period of main studies in the program (7 semesters)

Phase III – Internship period (1 semester or 6 months).

The study program “Physiotherapy” comprises 64 mandatory courses, of which 24 are program-specific and 40 are courses, offered by other departments of the University (12 of them are taught in the preparatory year and 28 during the main period of studies). All courses of the program can be grouped into 3 categories:

- University requirement courses, which focus on general competences and skills of learning, the English and 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, which are fundamental for all specialties in the field of medical sciences and they include courses such as “Anatomy”, “Biostatistics”, “Physiology”, “Chemistry” and other. 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 Department of Medical Rehabilitation Sciences 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 the university and college requirement courses, and its main is a kind of an orientation period for students to improve their English language skills and acquire the level of scientific, ethical, and cultural background necessary for further specialization. By the end of the preparatory year, students have to obtain 27 credits and to complete all the courses offered during this period successfully.

Phase II is dedicated to provide the students with specific theoretical, practical and scientific knowledge in the chosen field of medical care. This period in-

cludes program-related courses that offer students a good insight into the nature of their future work and functions. Apart from program-specific courses, this period contains also university and college requirement courses. Students complete this phase with the acquisition of the obligatory 126 credits and completion of all courses.

Phase III is the internship period, which lasts for 6 months and usually takes place at the University Hospital. 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 completion of the requirements of all theoretical courses. During the internship, students are required to complete training in the following directions: Neurology and Neurosurgery, Orthopaedics and Orthopaedics Surgery, Internal Medicine and Geriatrics, Paediatrics and Paediatrics Surgery, Emergency and Intensive Care Unit.

Experts positively evaluate the course structure and curriculum planning of the program, particularly of basic preparatory year courses and the practical training. Each academic year complies with the objectives of the program 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.

In terms of recommendation for further development, the experts encourage the Department of Medical Rehabilitation Sciences to introduce a larger variety of optional courses in the program.

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

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 came up with the conclusion that until now the self-study time does not include 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, 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”⁵. 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 to 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. Certain amount of credits should correspond to a certain amount of ours of student workload. Such a design of 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 shows a great level of commitment to the implementation and further improvement of learning processes in the program as well as the specific courses they are responsible for.

The teaching staff of the study program “Physiotherapy” comprises in total 50 members, out of which 14 (28%) are employed on a full-time basis and 36 (72%) on a part-time basis. Among the full-time teaching staff, there are 6 assistant professors, 6 lecturers and 2 demonstrators. Among the part-time teaching staff, there is one professor, 23 assistant professors and 12 lecturers. Besides, the technical-administrative staff includes one demonstrator, one assistant, one secretary, and one director of Physiotherapy Clinics.

The full enrolments capacity of the program is 40 places; the admission is each semester. The total number of students in case of full enrolment is 360, which means that the expected student-teacher ratio is approximately 12:1, in

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/docs/ects-guide_en.pdf

other words 12 students per 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, 137 students were admitted. Hence, the actual student-teacher ratio can be noticeably 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 all teaching staff of the study program.

To conclude, member of the teaching staff are appropriately qualified and experienced to perform their responsibilities in the program "Physiotherapy". 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 mas-

ter'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 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 fully met.

(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 Central Library of the University 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 Applied Medical Sciences and its departments. The Department of Medical Rehabilitation Sciences has at its disposal 3 lecture halls with the capacity of 30-40 seats, 1 seminar room for 15 seats and 10 laboratories that can accommodate from 15 to 30 students. The Department of Medical Rehabilitation Sciences does not have an own library, though there are plans to establish one in the future; at the moment, students of the program use the resources of the Central Library.

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. The program is financed by the University resources.

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 the central library.

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 ensure maximum effective utilization of facilities provided.

To conclude, the "Physiotherapy" 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 fully met.

(5) Study process and student assessment

The study program "Physiotherapy" is offered by the College of Applied Medical Sciences.

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 Department Council, the College administration, the Dean and other bodies functioning on the institutional level.

At the moment, the study program "Physiotherapy" is offered for male students only.

In order to be enrolled into the preparatory year in each study program accredited, applicants have to submit a Saudi Arabian Secondary School Certificate or an equivalent document and the results of an Aptitude Test organized by the National Centre for Assessment in Higher Education. An applicant's en-

rolment rate is determined by the school grade average (70%) and the Aptitude Test (30%). 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.

Upon completion of the preparatory year, students can apply for the admission to one of the programs offered by the College of Applied Medical Sciences. To be admitted to the College, students have to obtain a grade equivalent to 75% of performance in the preparatory year. The application is to be submitted online to the Deanship for Admission and Registration in the specified periods for each semester. Students are informed about the decision regarding admission within 72 hours after the application has been submitted.

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 program receive support from the teaching staff and internship supervisors of the Department and also from the hospital coordinators during the internship period. Each member of the teaching staff is assigned to a certain amount of students in order to provide them with academic guidance, which includes the explanation of the College regulations, the system of workload distribution, course structuring and other aspects. Students of the program can have individual counselling appointments with teachers during the office hours. Duties and responsibilities of internship supervisors and hospital coordinators are well-defined and described. Furthermore, program coordinators organize orientation sessions in the preparatory year, where students are shown medical laboratories and premises of the College before they decide which program to join. Finally, the University applies a special system of policies to support underachieving students and to award high-achieving 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 programs, the University names seminars and discussions, assessment of group assignments, homework, essays, presentations, practical sessions and other. Assessment methods are further categorized into: midterm written exams (20% of the final grade for the semester) final written exams (40%), midterm practical and oral exams (10%), final practical and oral exams (10%), 2 quizzes taken at the beginning and the end of a semester (10%), and an assignment carried out in the middle of a semester (10%).

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 examination. 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 institution with great potential and unique character striving towards academic growth and qualitative improvement of teaching and learning processes.

The College of Applied Medical Sciences prepares and implements a number of questionnaires to evaluate the efficiency 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. In this regard, experts agreed that the University should ensure that these 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 in the pro-

gram 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 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 College assures to provide equal rights and opportunities as well as similar equipment and learning material resources, for both female and male students.

The expert group concludes that the requirements of the criterion are met. 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 implementation of strategic development plans on the level of colleges and departments. 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 National Commission for Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA).

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

According to the University, at the end of each semester, the program coordinator submits a report for the discussion of program development and improvements by the program council. The Development and Quality Unit studies, analyses and summarises the obtained results, which are then submitted to the Dean of the College. Besides, this Unit issues an annual plan for the

improvement of the college, monitors the execution of this plan and then submit follow-up reports to the Deanship of Development and Quality.

The teaching process is evaluated in the College of Applied Medical Sciences 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 a consultation committee, which consists of representatives from professional practice and future employers. Finally, 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 the program. 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 through 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 Applied Medical Sciences issues an annual development report containing information on the achievements, shortcomings and the necessary changes and improvements for the next academic year.

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 study workload should be determined based on all activities performed by students, which include not only regulated theoretical classes, practical ses-

sions and the internship period, but also students' investment time of independent studies and preparation for examinations.

Teaching staff and other staff involved in the program must regularly evaluate and document their own performance and have to be personally committed to improve 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 for 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 "Physiotherapy" is demonstrated through the positive evaluations of the program by graduate students and their employers, according to the records of the Alumni Office of the University. Since there is a considerable lack of specialists in the field of medical care in Saudi Arabia, employment opportunities of the program graduates are claimed to be very good, which is confirmed by current employers as well.

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

The program has demonstrated its potential to prepare physiotherapists who can perform examinations, diagnosis and physical interventions in order to restore, as well as improve, patients' mobility and physical functionality. The University assures successful employment opportunities for the program graduates and also enables them to continue their academic career within the country and 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 "Physiotherapy" responds to the needs of the labor market situation in the Kingdom of Saudi-Arabia and especially in Najran region wit-

nessing 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.

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 responds 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 "Physiotherapy".

The members of the expert group have, at the same time, outlined a number of recommendations and suggestions, which in their opinion would lead to reinforce the educative potential of the program:

- In terms of further continuous study opportunities, 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.
- With regard to the aspect of internationality, the experts recommend the program designer to make more references to international standards and frameworks of teaching and working in the field of Physiotherapy. Furthermore, the program could adopt and apply the respective standards for the benefit of local needs and health care practices. As an example, the experts encourage the program designer to consider the "Essential Competency

Profile for Physiotherapists” from Canada (2009) or the "Physiotherapy Framework: putting physiotherapy behaviors, values, knowledge and skills into practice" from the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP, 2011; updated Sept. 2013).

- The Department of Medical Rehabilitation Sciences 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.
- Considering the structure of the curriculum, the experts strongly encourage the program management to introduce more optional courses.
- The experts recommend the Department of Medical Rehabilitation Sciences and the University in general, to 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 higher education process and is therefore included to the total amount of working hours and credits allocated in a study program;
 - 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 fitness'. 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 themselves. 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 "Physiotherapy"

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 "Physiotherapy" is completed with awarding of the academic degree "Bachelor of Applied Medical Sciences in Physiotherapy".

The regulated study period in the program "Physiotherapy" is five years: nine semesters at the University followed by a six-month internship. The study program "Physiotherapy" comprises 64 mandatory courses, of which 24 are program-specific and 40 are courses offered by other departments of the University (12 of them are taught in the preparatory year and 28 during the main period of studies).

The AHPGS Accreditation Commission considers that all Accreditation Criteria are fulfilled. The AHPGS Accreditation Commission accredits the study program "Physiotherapy" 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.