

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



Assessment Report

**for the Application of
the Sulaiman Al Rajhi Colleges, Al Bukairiyah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,
College of Medicine,
for the Accreditation of a Study Program
“Medical Bachelor and Bachelor of Surgery” (MBBS)**

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On-site visit February 26-27, 2018

Decision May 15, 2018

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1 Introduction

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

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

In carrying out accreditation procedures, the AHPGS follows the requirements of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). In the present case, the decision regarding the accreditation of the study program is carried out by the AHPGS Accreditation Commission based on the following accreditation criteria²:

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

² Approved by the AHPGS Accreditation Commission

The external assessment procedure is carried out in four steps:

I. The University's application

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

II. Written review

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

III. On-site visit (peer-review)

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

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

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

IV. The AHPGS accreditation decision

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

2 Overview

2.1 Procedure-related documents

The Sulaiman Al Rajhi Colleges (SRC), Al Bukairiyah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, also referred to hereinafter as “the University,” delegated the task of accrediting its Bachelor study program “Medical Bachelor and Bachelor of Surgery” (MBBS) to AHPGS.

The University’s Self-Evaluation Report (SER) for accreditation (without the awarding of the official seal of the Accreditation Council of the Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programs in Germany) of the above-mentioned study program (hereinafter referred to as the Self-Evaluation Report or SER) was submitted to the Accreditation Agency in Health and Social Science (AHPGS e.V.) in electronic format on August 8, 2017.

On September 27, 2017 the AHPGS forwarded the open questions and explanatory notes (hereinafter OQ) pertaining to the Application for accreditation for the study programs to the University. On October 16, 2017, the University submitted the answers to the open questions and explanatory notes (hereinafter AOQ) to the AHPGS in electronic format.

The present document presents the summary of the AHPGS for the Bachelor study program “Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery” (MBBS). The first cohort for this program was admitted in the academic year 2010/2011.

The application documentation submitted by the University follows the outline recommended by the AHPGS. The following documents can be found in the application package (the documents submitted by the University are numbered in the following order for easier referencing):

Appendix	Description
1	Study Plan and Workload
2	Program Specifications (following the NCAAA format)
3	Module Descriptions/Course Specifications
4	Approval Levels for Introducing, Reviewing and Amending in Programs & Courses
5	General Layout of Blocks, Clusters and Longitudinal courses
6	Students Handbook

7	Regulations for the Training of Medical Interns
8	Mini Clinical Evaluation Exercise (Mini-CEX) Form
9	Case Based Discussion (CBD) Form
10	Intern Competency Assessment Form
11	Directly Observed Procedural Skills (DOPS) Form
12	Field Experience Specifications and Field Experience Assessment Blueprint
13	SRC's Quality Management System
14	Graduates' Survey
15	Portfolio Checklist
16	Overview: Annual Professional Behavior Assessment
17	Human Resources Policy
18	Library Information
19	Collaboration Agreement with Qassim University
20	Admission Requirements
21	Educational Franchise Contract with Maastricht University
22	Research Contract with Maastricht University
23	Students Training Contract
24	List of teachers
25	Teaching Interdependence Matrix
26	Faculty CVs
27	SRC Strategic Plan
28	SRC Key Performance Indicators (KPI)
29	National Qualification Framework for Higher Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The Summary, the Expert Report as well as the resolution of the Accreditation Commission build the basis for the present Assessment Report.

2.2 Study program

2.2.1 Structural data

University	Sulaiman Al Rajhi Colleges
Faculty/Department	College of Medicine
Cooperation partners	- Qassim University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia - University of Maastricht, Netherlands

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prince Mohammad Bin Abdulaziz Hospital, Riad - King Fahd Medical City, Riad - King Faisal Hospital, Riad - King Saud Medical City, Riad - Yamamah Hospital, Riad - Prince Sultan Military Hospital, Riad - King Salman Hospital, Riad - King Khaled University Hospital, Riad - National Guard Hospital, Dammam City - Saud Al Batain Cardiac Center, Dammam City - Maternity and Children Hospital, Dammam - King Saud Hospital, Onaizah - Maternity and Children Hospital, Buraidah - National Guard Hospital, Jeddah 								
Title of the study program	"Medical Bachelor and Bachelor of Surgery"								
Degree awarded	Medical Bachelor and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS)								
Form of studies	Full-time, on-campus								
Language of instruction	English								
Period of education	10 semesters / five years + preparatory year + one year clinical internship (non-credit bearing)								
Credit Points (CP) according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)	234 Credit Hours (CH)								
Credit Hours (CH)	234 Credit Hours (CH) One Credit Hour (CH) refers to a theoretical lecture/ laboratory/tutorial session of no less than 50 minutes, or a practicum/field work of no less than 100 minutes. Also included are educational activities such as portfolio, professional behavior, longitudinal assignments and CORE etc., meant to develop and assess certain aspects of students' personality, certain required competencies and professional skills.								
Workload	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 30%;">Total:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">9029 hours</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Contact hours:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">6116 hours</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Self-study hours:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">2468 hours</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Practice:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">445 hours</td> </tr> </table>	Total:	9029 hours	Contact hours:	6116 hours	Self-study hours:	2468 hours	Practice:	445 hours
Total:	9029 hours								
Contact hours:	6116 hours								
Self-study hours:	2468 hours								
Practice:	445 hours								

CP for the final paper	No final paper (thesis) required.
Launch date of the study program	September 2010 (male section) September 2016 (female section)
First accreditation	Not accredited yet
Time of admission	Annually in September
Number of available places in the program	200 per year
Number of enrolled students to date	260
Number of dropouts to date	34
Number of graduates to date	27
Enrollment conditions	<p>1) <u>Preparatory Year:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Graduation from high school in natural sciences within the previous 3 years with a percentage of 90% or equivalent. - Passing the aptitude and achievement test with a percentage of 75% or higher. - Passing the English placement test or achieving 63 in STEP or equivalent. - Passing a personal interview session. - Being medically fit. <p>2) <u>Undergraduate MBBS program</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Completion of the Preparatory Year with a CGPA of at least 3.75 out 5. - TOEFL test score of at least 500 or equivalent. - Achieving a score of at least 65% on the medicine acceptance test.. - Passing the personal interview session. - Being medically fit, i.e. in good physical and hygienic condition.
Tuition fees	90,000 Saudi Riyal per annum

Table 1: Structural data of the study program

2.2.2 Qualification objectives and employment opportunities

According to the University, the program's learning objectives are to produce highly competent health professionals who are able to deliver evidence-based patient- and community-centered health care. The graduating physicians are supposed to care for patients with common medical problems as well as life-threatening conditions by integrating basic, clinical, behavioral and social sciences into their decision-making and clinical reasoning. The University endeavors to ensure that all graduates meet or exceed the benchmarks set by national regulations (the SaudiMed Framework) and understand the health needs, healthcare practices and the healthcare system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, thereby supporting health promotion and disease prevention.

The Sulaiman Al Rajhi Colleges also intend to ensure that the graduates are able to demonstrate basic research skills.

Furthermore, the University strives to equip its students with professional attitude and behavior, including effective communication with patients and their families, colleagues, and other health professionals; the demonstration of leadership skills; the capacity for self-reflection and professional development; and the application of Islamic, legal and ethical principles in their professional practice.

According to the University, all curative, preventative and medico-technical fields in the public and private sectors are open as careers for graduating students. They may pursue postgraduate studies nationally and internationally, join public and private hospitals and clinics, the pharmaceutical or the medico-technical industry. The University reports that Saudi Arabia increasingly invests in expanding and extending its health care services to cover the entire country and population. As a result, the demand for qualified physicians in the Kingdom far outstrips the supply which, according to the University, ensures high employability of its graduates.

2.2.3 Modularization and exam system

Before starting the MBBS study program, students have to successfully complete the Sulaiman Al Rajhi Colleges' Preparatory Year, comprising 16 compulsory modules, eight per semester. The following program itself consists of a five year study period, comprising 64 modules, out of which 61 are obligatory and three are compulsory elective modules, offering the choice of two out of

five courses in year 2 and one out of seven courses in year 5. This study period is followed by a non-credit-bearing but obligatory one-year internship, comprising seven rotations. The study plan contains between 11 and 16 modules per year, organized in blocks, clusters and rotations. A *block* is defined as a “theme-based study unit in the medical program generally equivalent to an academic course” (Appendix 6: Student’s Handbook, p. 15). A *cluster* is defined as a “subject-based study unit in the third year of the medical program generally equivalent to an academic course” (ibid., p.16). A *rotation* is defined as a period of teaching, learning and training in which students in fourth and fifth years of the MBBS program apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired during the first three years of study to diagnose medical problems and manage people having these problems (AOQ 6). According to the study plan (Appendix 1), a block spreads over a time of four to eight weeks, a cluster over eight to ten weeks, and a rotation over a time of two to up to 14 weeks. Furthermore, there are *longitudinal assignments* that are spread over the whole year. The goal of Non-block Assignments (NBA) is to develop the competence of students in pharmacology, pharmacotherapy and prescription writing. These are offered in the first two years under the general heading of “personal formularium (PF)”. Four assignments are offered in each of the first two years. The most important aspect of PF is the understanding of a given clinical scenario by the student, rationalization of the choice of suitable drug and argument to support and justify his/her first choice of medication (AOQ 7).

The following study plan lists the University-recommended sequence of courses for the attainment of the degree Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS).

Year	Number	Title	Duration in weeks	CH
Preparatory Year				
P1	ENGL101	English Reading (1)	15	2
	ENGL102	English Listening and Speaking (1)	15	2
	ENGL103	English Writing (1)	15	2
	ENGL104	English Grammar (1)	15	2
	CHEM102	Introduction to Biochemistry	15	3

	STAT101	Biostatistics	15	2
	STS101	Study Skills	15	2
	COM102	Information Communication Technologies	15	1
P2	ENGL111	English Reading (2)	15	2
	ENGL112	English Listening and Speaking (2)	15	2
	ENGL113	English Writing (2)	15	2
	ENGL114	English Grammar (2)	15	2
	ME101	Medical Terminology	15	2
	COS101	Communication Skills	15	2
	BIOL101	Biology	15	3
	PHYS106	Biophysics	15	2
Total:				33
Pre-Clinical Phase (Year 1-3) / Basic Sciences Department				
1	IC101	Islamic Culture	15	2
	IC102	Islamic Culture	15	2
	ARAB101	Arabic Language	15	2
	BBS201	Growth and Development I	8	4
	BBS202	Circulation and Breathing I	8	4
	BBS203	Regulation and Integration	4	2
	BBS204	Thinking and Doing I	8	4
	BBS205	Digestion and Defense I	8	4
	BBS206	Diabetes, Obesity and Lifestyle	4	2
	PRT101	Portfolio Year I	Longitudinal	2
	PB101	Professional Behavior Course I	Longitudinal	4
	CORE101	Consultation Skills and Reflection Education	Longitudinal	2
	CSK101	Clinical Skills	Longitudinal	4
	NBA101	Non-block Assignment	Longitudinal	2
	PT	Progress Test	Longitudinal	2
Total:			40	42
2	IC103	Islamic Culture	15	2

	ARAB102	Arabic Language	15	2
	BBS211	Circulation and Breathing II	8	4
	BBS212	Growth and Development II	8	4
	BBS213	Elective (1 out of 3): Fundamentals of Neuroscience, Infectious Diseases, Introduction to Pharmacology - Kinetics	4	2
	BBS214	Digestion and Defense II	8	4
	BBS215	Thinking and Doing II	8	4
	BBS216	Elective (1 out of 2): Pharmacology, Hematology	4	2
	PRT202	Portfolio Year II	Longitudinal	2
	PB202	Professional Behavior Course II	Longitudinal	4
	CSK202	Clinical Skills II	Longitudinal	4
	NBA202	Non-block Assignment	Longitudinal	2
	PT202	Progress Test	Longitudinal	2
Total:			40	40
3	IC104	Islamic Culture	15	2
	CBS301	Abdomen	10	10
	CBS302	Locomotor Apparatus	10	4
	CBS303	Circulation and Lungs	10	10
	CBS304	Psych medical problems	9	5
	PRT302	Portfolio Year III	Longitudinal	2
	HLHE301	Health Law and Health Ethics	Longitudinal	1
	PB301	Professional Behavior Course III	Longitudinal	4
	CSK301	Clinical Skills	Longitudinal	3
	CORE301	Consultation Skills and Reflection Education	Longitudinal	4
	CAT301	Critical Appraisal of a Topic	Longitudinal	2
	NBA303	Non-cluster Related Assignment	Longitudinal	1
	PT303	Progress Test	Longitudinal	2
Total:			39	39
Clinical Phase (Year 4-5) / Clinical Sciences Department				

4	MED401	Internal Medicine	14	10
	SURG402	Surgery	14	10
	ER403	Emergency Medicine	5	3
	ORTH404	Orthopedics	4	3
	DERM407	Dermatology	3	2
	RAD408	Radiology	Longitudinal	2
	PB409	Professional Behavior Course IV	Longitudinal	2
	PRT410	Portfolio Year IV	Longitudinal	2
	PT411	Progress Test	Longitudinal	2
	HLHE412	Health Law and Health Ethics	Longitudinal	1
	CAT413	Critical Appraisal of a Topic	Longitudinal	1
Total:			38	38
5	PED450	Pediatrics	10	8
	OBN451	Obstetrics and Gynecology	10	8
	FM452	Family Medicine	7	5
	PSYC453	Psychiatry	4	4
	RES454	Research	Longitudinal	4
	ELE455	Elective (1 out of 7): Internal Medicine, General Surgery, Emergency Medicine, Orthopedics, Obstetrics 6 Gynecology, Pediatrics Medicine, Family Medicine	3	2
	OPHT405	Ophthalmology	3	2
	ENT406	Ear, Nose and Throat	3	2
	PB456	Professional Behavior Course V	Longitudinal	2
	PRT457	Portfolio Year V	Longitudinal	2
	PT458	Progress Test	Longitudinal	2
	HLHE459	Health Law and Health Ethics	Longitudinal	1
Total:				42
6	Internship Year			-
	Internal Medicine		8	-
	Surgery		8	-

	Pediatrics	8	-
	Emergency	4	-
	Gynecology and Obstetrics	4	-
	Elective Optional Specialization	8	-
	Selective Optional Specialization	8	-
	Professional Behavior	Longitudinal	-
	Portfolio	Longitudinal	-
	Progress Test	Longitudinal	-
Total for the whole program:			234

Table 2: Study Plan

The module descriptions (Appendix 3) cover the following aspects: Module title and number, level/year, credit hours and hours to be spend for tutorials, lectures, practical and self-study, teaching language, learning outcomes and module contents and assessment methods.

The Preparatory Year serves as a foundational year for the MBBS program, focusing approximately 50% on English language skills and standards required for the medical program, such as biochemistry, biostatistics and general study skills.

The University states that the program takes a holistic view on the subject by addressing themes related to the human body rather than individual systems, structures and organs. The curriculum is supposed to follow a spiral pattern with topics taken up in a cyclical fashion, increasing in complexity and reinforcing previous learning through introductory, proficient and advanced levels (see Appendix 5: General Layout of Courses).

The first year of the study program has "The Human Body in Health and Sickness" as its topic. Year 2 has as its theme "Stages of Life and Diagnostics". The topic of Year 3 is "From Paper to Patient" and supposed to be a bridging arrangement between pre-clinical and the clinical phases. Students in this this year attend clinical skills training in the clinical lab as well as undergo hospital ward teaching (Appendix 6: Students' Handbook, pp.33-34). Thus, in the three first years of the pre-clinical phase, students learn the structure and functions of the various systems comprising the human body, in addition to learning the causes of different diseases, how they occur and how they can

be avoided (ibid., p. 10). Additionally, students from years 1 to 3 have to attend and pass a clinical skills course in the clinical labs using simulated patients and mannequins every year (SER 1.2.1).

Additionally, students from years 1 to 3 have to attend and pass a clinical skills course every year. They undergo clinical skills training in the clinical labs using simulated patients and mannequins. The clinical skills courses end with an Objective Structured Clinical Exam (OSCE).

Moreover, Islamic Studies and Arabic language courses are mandatory graduation requirements in Saudi Arabian higher education and are offered jointly by all programs at SRC. The Ministry of Education provides the basic guidance for their design (SER 1.2.2).

Second, in the clinical phase (4th and 5th year), the main focus is on developing skills that a doctor should have, such as taking medical history of the patient, conducting medical examination, diagnosing and offering treatment. In this phase, students come across diverse subjects such as Internal Medicine, Emergency Room, General Surgery, Orthopedics, Family Medicine, Psychiatry, Obstetrics and Gynecology as well as Dermatology, Radiology and Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) (SER1.2.1).

The University states to apply a student-centered educational approach and the Problem-based Learning methodology (PBL). Usually, students are divided in small groups of up to 10 and a tutor is assigned to each group. Students are supposed to formulate their own learning goals based on the main themes of the course and the topics contained in the course. Tutors are supposed to manage the process rather than the content of courses, and should ensure that the learning goals are in line with the course objectives. The construction of a problem and the subsequent formulation of learning goals ensure that all relevant medical discipline-related aspects of the problems shall be covered. Usually, these problems are developed by experts from Maastricht with inputs from SRC teachers (SER 1.2.4). In the fourth and fifth year teaching is mainly in hospital wards and outpatient departments. Small groups of ten students are maintained in ward teaching.

Lastly, the students have to successfully complete the Internship Year and stay twelve months at the hospital for training in order to enrich their skills and experience and to build their confidence about their knowledge and skills

(SER 1.2.1). The Internship Year is governed by detailed policy and procedures through the “Regulations Governing the Training of Medical Interns” (Internship Regulations, Appendix 7) and the “Field Training Specifications” of the Saudi National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (Appendix 12). The students complete rotations in Internal Medicine, Surgery, Pediatrics, Emergency, and Gynecology and Obstetrics. Additionally, students have another two months for a Selective Optional Specialization to select one of the minor sub-specializations in internal medicine, surgery, obstetrics and gynecology, female and reproductive diseases, pediatrics, family medicine or psychiatry, and another two months for an Elective Optional Specialization to choose from any medical specialization, also a repetition of a previous mandatory training period (see Appendix 7: Internship Regulations, Article 3). The University states that SRC staff regularly conducts supervisory visits to the hospitals to ensure satisfactory progress of the interns. For the assessment of the interns, SRC has designed tools that mainly assess competencies related to medical and clinical, behavioral and psychomotor skills (see Appendix 8 to 10). To realize practical teaching and the internship in clinical and hospital settings, the University collaborates with department of 14 hospitals and medical centers (see Appendix 19). According to the University, all medical facilities have been declared fit for internship training by the Ministry of Health. Therefore, all supervisors overseeing the interns must be adequately qualified (SER 1.2.6). Besides the clinical supervisor, the University installed a Field Training Unit, an Internship Coordinator and an Internship Committee in order to manage and supervise the logistics, the technical and professional aspects and the outcomes of the internship (SER 1.2.6).

Students of all five years maintain portfolios that are supposed to be a self-analysis report in which students reflect about their studies through the respective years. Additionally, students of all five years have their professional behaviors assessed by teachers and tutors. According to the University, interactive lectures, seminars, presentations and projects are also used as didactic tools (SER 1.2.4).

In the fifth year, students have to take a research course which leads, through a group research project, to the production of a research article submitted for publication (SER 1.2.7).

The MBBS study program uses Moodle as its e-learning platform, mostly for file upload/download facility, discussion forum and communication medium, announcements, calendar and assignment submission (SER 1.2.5).

Except the courses in Islamic Culture and Arabic Language, the whole study program is taught in English.

Maastricht University franchised its curriculum to SRC until September 1, 2020 (see Appendix 21). Additionally, SRC has an exchange program with Maastricht University. Every year, a limited number of students who have at least completed the first year and a GPA higher than 4.50, may study a course that does not exceed two months at Maastricht University, fully sponsored by SRC. Students who want to study a block at Maastricht University at their own expenses are still exempted from the tuition fees (Appendix 6: Student's Handbook, p. 64-66). In the academic year 2017/18, students from Maastricht University will be attending academic activities at SRC.

SRC applies a combination of continuous and end-of-course assessment with 40:60 or 30:70 ratios, respectively (SER 1.2.3). The type of assessments include multiple choice questions, modified essay questions, short essay questions and quizzes, individual and group assignments, oral exams, objective structured clinical exam (OSCE), portfolios and presentations, e-posters, projects, assessment of professional behavior and consultation and reflection education (CORE). The assessment methods are indicated in the respective module description. According to the Students' Handbook (Appendix 6, p. 26), each block, cluster and rotation will have an examination that tests learning outcomes, knowledge, insights and skills related to the theme of the block, cluster or rotation.

The evaluation and grading system of the University is described in the Students' Handbook (Appendix 6, pp. 24-32). The student performance is assessed based on a 5-point scale (5.00 exceptional, 2.00 minimum passing, 1.00 fail). In line with recommendations of the Ministry of Education, a minimum score of 60% is needed to pass a course and a minimum of a Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) 2 out of 5 is required for promotion to the next year. The Cumulative GPA refers to the total number of quality points a student has earned in all the courses taken since enrolment at the SRC for a particular program, divided by the total number of credit hours assigned for these courses (*ibid.*, p.15).

Students may redo an examination or a part of an examination only if he/she has a 'fail' status or grade in that examination or part of the examination. For each failed exam, a resit exam will be offered at least once within the academic year (Appendix 6: Student's Handbook, p. 32). Students who fail in resit exams or fail in courses that do not have resit exams shall remain in the same year and must repeat the failed courses. For the years 1 to 3 (pre-clinical phase) there is no bar on resits. However, in the clinical phase (year 4 and 5) a student has to repeat the whole course after failing two resits (AOQ 13). The College Council may allow the student to continue to the next year while retaining the failed courses on condition that they do not exceed the maximum study load. The College Council may also allow the failing student to take courses from the following year on condition that they fulfill the previous requirements (*ibid.*, p. 17).

The recognition of credits transferred from other universities (domestic and abroad) as well as from other study programs within SRC is regulated in the Students' Handbook (Appendix 6, pp. 39-40).

Regulations concerning the compensations for students with disabilities and chronic illnesses are defined in the Student's Handbook. "For students with disabilities arrangements should be made, once a request to this effect has been submitted, to take examinations in a manner adapted to accommodate their individual disability" (Appendix 6, p. 31).

2.2.4 Admission requirements

Admission policies and procedures along with the requirements are listed in the "Requirements for Admission" (Appendix 20). Before being admitted to the MBBS study program, students must successfully complete the Preparatory Year at SRC. To be admitted to the Preparatory Year, students must

- have graduated high school in the natural sciences group during the previous three years with a percentage of 90 % or equivalent,
- pass the aptitude and achievement test with a percentage of 75 % or higher,
- pass the English placement test for the admission or achieve 63 in STEP or equivalent,
- pass a personal interview session,
- be medically fit.

SRC states that the University would like to refrain from admitting students afflicted with non-curable chronic infectious diseases and those who may not be able to perform invasive procedures without posing a risk to their patients during their study or after graduation. SRC does not block students with physical or medical disabilities from pursuing medical studies and professional duties thereafter (SER 1.2.3).

In order to be accepted to the MBBS study program following the Preparatory Year, students must

- have a CGPA of at least 3.5 out of 5,
- have a TOEFL test score of at least 500 or equivalent.

2.3 Study conditions and quality assurance

2.3.1 Human resources

To implement the MBBS study program, SRC appointed 37 staff members, 11 in the Basic Sciences Department and 13 in the Clinical Sciences Department. Additionally, there are three staff members in the Department of Applied Sciences, two in the Research Unit, four in the Preparatory Year Department, two for Skills Lab instruction, three in the Quality Assurance Unit and four from the Business Administration Department. For the new female section, there are assigned five teachers up to now. As a whole, the teaching staff in the MBBS study program comprises four professors, four associate professors, 16 assistant professors and 13 lecturers (Appendix 24).

All faculty members are employed full-time. The full teaching load of all regular academic staff members is ten hours for professors, 12 hours for associate professors, 14 hours for assistant professors and 16 hours for lecturers and instructors. Those assigned to administrative duties shall have their teaching load reduced to no less than three teaching hours (Appendix 17: Human Resources Policy, chapter 12). The University's management may give study and conference full-paid vacations not exceeding ten days per year (*ibid.*, chapter 13).

The University has regulations for the hiring and retention of the teaching staff (Appendix 17). Instructors and lecturers must hold a Master's degree with a GPA of at least Very Good. Those holding a Doctorate degree and transferring from an administrative job to a faculty job are appointed to the title of Assis-

tant Professor in the field of expertise of their Doctorate degree. To be appointed to the level of Associate Professor, a doctorate degree and four years' experience in the faculty of a recognized university as Assistant Professor is required. Being appointed to the level of Professor requires a Doctorate degree and at least eight years' experience in the faculty of a recognized university, including at least four years after promotion to the level of Associate Professor. The recruitment of faculty members is based upon the request of the relevant Department Council along with the College Council, and hiring must be supported by the Board of Trustees (Appendix 17, chapter 5). SRC carries out an Orientation Program for all new employees to introduce them to the work environment and to reduce the time it takes to achieve the required outputs and outcomes (ibid., chapter 11).

SRC maintains a Training Department which, based on the annual analysis of training needs, prepares a training plan for both, academic and administrative staff. Employees may also attend external and international trainings (ibid., chapter 20). The Health Professions Education (HPE) Unit is responsible for the development and implementation of induction, orientation and continued training programs for the faculty of the MBBS program (SER 2.1.3). The Faculty Development Program is compulsory for all teachers. Its sessions comprise educational development in teaching and assessment, research and use of technology (ibid.). Moreover, SRC and the University of Maastricht jointly offer a six-month University Teaching Qualification (UTQ) Course for faculty that focuses on the developing various teaching and assessment methodologies. Attending UTQ is mandatory for all teachers working at SRC (ibid.).

2.3.2 Facilities

The learning premises at SRC are divided into female and male sections.

The MBBS study program accesses one auditorium that both sections can share. The female section comprises two lecture halls, six seminar/tutorial rooms and two computer labs equipped with 40 computers. The male section comprises six lecture halls, 20 seminar/tutorial rooms and two computer labs equipped with 93 computers.

The University states that it is well-equipped with a skills labs complex that offers clinical skills training to both male and female students. The timings of

sessions and week days have been staggered in such a way that it can accommodate both sides (AOQ 17).

According to the University, SRC hosts a library comprising 2,108 hard copy books of which 1,434 are considered MBBS program-related (SER 2.3.2). Additionally, the library disposes 19,772 E-books of which 2200 are medical books from the Jaypee database and 1,157 are from the Clinical key database. The library contracted also 500 medical E-journals from the Clinical key database. Databases and E-books can be accessed from outside SRC (SER 2.3.2 and Appendix 18).

SRC admitted a budget of 400,000 Saudi Riyals for program-related new acquisitions in the academic year 2016/2017 (ibid.).

2.3.3 Quality assurance

SRC's Quality Management System (QMS) emerges out of its Strategic Plan 2012 (Appendix 27). The Quality Management Handbook (Appendix 13) has been produced by the Planning, Development and Quality Administration (PDQA). It provides the structure for the internal quality assurance processes and captures the planning processes, mechanisms for evaluation and internal reporting on educational programs, self-study and improvement plans. The University's quality strategy and planning follows a PDCA-cyclical approach (ibid., Chapter 2.6).

The PDQA has the responsibility of assisting academic and administrative departments and units to plan and introduce improvement strategies, evaluate performance achievement, and publicly report on what has been achieved. SRC has also established a Central Quality Committee (CQC). All major academic and administrative departments and units are represented on the CQC. They work closely with the PDQA in planning and executing activities related to Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI).

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) is the primary objective of SRC's QMS. SRC expresses the assessment of performance in terms of standards provided by the Saudi National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA), national and international benchmarks from comparable institutions, or views of independent evaluators with relevant experience of higher education management. Therefore, SRC set key performance indicators (KPI, Appendix 28) on institutional and on program level (ibid., Chapter 1.3).

To secure quality in teaching and learning at SRC, all programs and courses have to specify that its learning outcomes are consistent with the National Qualification Framework and other requirements for employment and professional practice (ibid., Chapter 3.2). This concept centers on a policy framework that ensures that the introduction of new academic programs or effecting major changes in the existing programs is meticulously evaluated at various levels and then approved (Appendix 4: Levels of Approval). In case of the MBBS study program, the review process ensured the alignment of the program with the SaudiMed Framework (SER 1.2.2/1.6.1).

SRC uses the NCAAA-specified program standards for learning and teaching as the main guidance for its programmatic QMS. “Standards for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education Programs” and “the Self Evaluation Scales for Higher Education Programs” (Appendix 29) published by the NCAAA are the standard guidebooks for quality assurance and CQI activities related all programs being currently offered or planned at SRC.

Course specifications and reports serve as monitoring and evaluation tools to measure academic achievements of students and to implement the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle. Two weeks after completion of courses, course reports are produced by the instructor and compare the actual delivery of the course with the course plan and the KPI. Then, the course specification for the following course is based on the preceding course report.

This is also true for field experiences/internships (Appendix 13, Chapter 3.11). Completed field experience reports are shared with the program coordinator and the PDQA for quality review and follow-up of the improvement plans. Additionally, SRC organizes follow up meetings in which students reflect on and generalize from their internship experience.

Following completion of an academic year and receipt of all course reports, the program coordinator or an equivalent post or the head of the department prepares an Annual Program Report.

Moreover, SRC requires all academic programs to conduct an evaluation of the quality of the program using the rating scales given in the “Self-Evaluation Scales for Higher Education Programs” (Appendix 29).

According to the University, feedback to and from students has been institutionalized at SRC. Routinely, the Assessment Unit along with the course coor-

ordinator takes a feedback session for students after every exam (SER 1.2.3). SRC calculates a weekly student work load for a course with a maximum of 24 hours. Moreover, almost all courses comprising the MBBS program have course planning groups that must have at least two students. Generally, these groups meet on a weekly basis to evaluate the progression of courses against their objectives (SER 1.6.3). The University states that students are regularly asked in post-course evaluations to give their calculation of the private study hours per week that were additional to the contact hours per week in order to adjust the study load (SER 1.6.5). According to the University, the medical program has a study load ranging from 12 to 23 hours per week (SER 1.6.8).

Students evaluate courses electronically. SRC use the evaluation platform provided by “Qualtrics” for this purpose. Generally, each course will have two evaluations; one for the educational activities at the end of the course but before exams, and the second after the exams (AOQ 18).

Of the three cohorts that have graduated so far, one cohort has been surveyed for follow-up of the graduate studies and to explore practical relevance of the study program (SER 1.6.4). The results were positive perceptions of graduates (Appendix 14: Graduate Survey).

Besides the “Students’ Handbook” (Appendix 6), all students receive information about attendance requirements and course-specific requirements during the first session of the course (SER 1.6.7).

Teachers have to display day and time for at least four hours per week as office hours. Besides the general availability of teachers for consultation and advice, students’ guidance and support along their studies is carried out through a mentoring system within the portfolio program (see 2.3.3). Teachers act as mentors. Students are allocated to teachers as mentees. Mentors and mentees conduct at least four meetings in a year. Mentors help students develop portfolios according to the prescribed format (Appendix 15: Portfolio Checklist) (SER 1.6.8).

The University’s Counselling Unit is available for students who need psychological and psychiatric support. It is managed by a professional psychiatrist and provides psychiatric services free of charge (SER 1.6.8).

In the first week of each academic year, both, teachers and students undergo induction orientation training, also to become familiar with the range of support services available (ibid.).

The total enrolment in all five years of the MBBS program is 200 on the male side. The female section has just been started in 2016/17 with 11 students (5 Saudi + 6 Non-Saudi). Of these 211 students, 14 (7%) are Saudis whilst the remaining are expatriates from Syria, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh (SER 1.6.9). In its Quality Management Handbook, SRC states that, if there are separate sections for male and female, there must be effective communication between them and full involvement in planning and decision making processes (Appendix 13, Chapter 1.3.3). Moreover, required standards must be the same, equivalent resources provided, and evaluations must include data for each section (ibid.). SRC states to maintain effective and efficient communications between the male and female sections within the culturally permitted limits. Video links, interactive boards that are simultaneously visible in the two sections during lectures and representation of both sections in all relevant committees ensure gender balance between the female and male sections (ibid., Chapter 2.14). However, separate reports are prepared for the two sections to monitor and evaluate the level of achievement of these quality standards.

As reasons for students' drop out of the program, SRC names difficulty with the visa application for non-Saudi nationals, losing the scholarship and non-affordable tuition fees, and acceptance by another comparable college or university (AOQ 4).

Starting from 2016/17, students from Ghana and Indonesia have been admitted in the preparatory and MBBS programs under the International Talent Development Program. The Sulaiman bin Abdulaziz AlRajhi Charitable Foundation that is financing the University funds this full scholarships covering tuitions fees, airfare, full board and lodging to promote talented students from all over the world (AOQ 20).

The "Sheikh Sulaiman Al-Rajhi Scholarship" grants 30% of the total amount of the official tuition fees to all applicants who are studying on their own expense. It applies only during the first semester of the academic year upon joining colleges. After the student passes the first semester of the first academic year, students shall be given a deduction from the total amount of the

official tuition fees for the following semester / year according to the term / yearly GPA ("Academic Excellence Scholarship"). Moreover, SRC offers a 15% discount off the original tuition fees for children of faculty members. SRC gives another 5% discount for siblings of already enrolled students.

2.4 Information about the University

Sulaiman Al Rajhi Colleges (SRC) is a private non-profit higher education institution, funded by the Saudi businessman Sheikh Sulaiman Abdul Aziz Al Rajhi. It defined the following objectives (Appendix 6: Students' Handbook, p. 7):

- 1) Meeting the needs of the work force in society through the promotion of competent and creative individuals who take leadership initiatives, and are always subjectively and professionally ready to engage in the work field and in society.
- 2) Producing scientific research that contributes, not only in solving the problems of society, but also meeting its present and future needs.
- 3) Participating in sustainable development in the social, cultural and economic fields, amongst others, through building strategic partnerships locally and internationally which contributes to achieving the colleges' mission.
- 4) Building a sound reputation locally and internationally, and achieving prestigious international status through establishing effective international colleges.
- 5) Adopting an effective educational system that, not only ensures the quality of the learning and teaching process, but also combines academic excellence and personal development of students, and qualifies students in the work field and in life.
- 6) Making available a university environment which consolidates one's religious beliefs and which firmly establishes ethical and professional values, and strengthens students' spirit of ingenuity and sense of accomplishment and success.

The Saudi Ministry of Education (MOE) has licensed SRC to offer programs. Founded in 2009, it consists today of two Colleges and the Sulaiman bin Abdulaziz School of Business.

Since 2009, the College of Medicine offers the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) study program. The College of Medical Laboratory Sciences offers the Bachelor of Medical Laboratory Sciences. In 2016, a fe-

male section was added to both Colleges. Since 2016, the Sulaiman Abdulaziz School of Business offers a Bachelor of Business Administration study program. The fourth program SRC got licensed for by the MOE is the Bachelor of Nursing which has not been started yet.

In total, currently 383 students study at Sulaiman Al Rajhi Colleges, most of them, namely 232, are enrolled at the College of Medicine. According to the University, the majority of the students at SRC receives financial support in the form of scholarships and study grants from different governmental and non-governmental institutions. The Sulaiman Al Rajhi Trust contributes the major share of total funding support to students (SER 3.1.1).

3 Expert Report

3.1 Preliminary remarks

The Accreditation Agency for Study Programs in Health and Social Sciences (hereinafter AHPGS) was commissioned by Sulaiman Al Rajhi Colleges (hereinafter “the University” or “SRC”) to accredit the study program “Medical Bachelor and Bachelor of Surgery” (MBBS).

The on-site visit evaluation of the study program “Medical Bachelor and Bachelor of Surgery” offered at the Sulaiman Al Rajhi Colleges was carried out on February 26-27, 2018 on campus in Al Bukairiyah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

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

As representatives of higher education institutions:

Prof. Dr. Gerlinde Egerer, M.D.

Heidelberg University Hospital, Germany
Internist and Chief Resident

Prof. Rolf Heusser³

*National Institute for Cancer Epidemiology and Registration (NICER), Zurich, Switzerland
Director*

Prof. Dr. Gerd Mikus, M.D.

Heidelberg University Hospital, Germany
Clinical Pharmacologist and Chief Resident

Dr. Ulrich Stößel

*Albert-Ludwig-University, Freiburg, Germany
Academic Superintendent at the Institute for Medical Sociology*

As a student representative:

Ms. Franziska Jagoda

Witten/Herdecke University, Germany
Master’s studies in Nursing Sciences

According to the *Rules for the Accreditation of Study Programs and for System Accreditation* (determined by the decision of the Accreditation Commission, of December 8, 2009 in the version of February 20, 2013, Drs. AR

³ The experts shown in italics did not participate in the on-site visit of the University.

20/2013), the task of the experts in the accreditation procedures is to evaluate the education concept of a specific study program as well as to estimate the possibility of its successful implementation. This concerns, in particular, qualification objectives of the study program, its conceptual integration into the system of education, the concept of the study program, feasibility of the content and scope of studies, the examination system, study-relevant collaborations, personnel, material and space resources, transparency and documentation, application of the results of quality assurance for further development of the study program (it is especially important to present the analyses and evaluation results of student workload, academic accomplishments and employment of graduates, which are to be documented and taken into account within the framework of continuous development of the study program), as well as the provision of gender equality and equal opportunities. The experts should also take into consideration and verify whether study programs with special profiles (e.g. dual, part-time, occupational or distance learning study programs) comply with the relevant criteria and requirements.

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

3.2 Basic information about the study program

The main objective of the Bachelor study program “Medical Bachelor and Bachelor of Surgery,” or “MBBS,” offered at the College of Medicine, Sulaiman Al Rajhi Colleges, Al Bukairiyah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is to produce competent physicians who ensure quality care for patients using evidence-based methods to combat common medical problems and life-threatening ailments. The study program requires the obtainment of 234 Credit Hours (CH); each Credit Hour corresponds to a lecture, laboratory session or tutorial of at least 50 minutes in length, or to a practical/field work of at least 100 minutes in length. The program applies the University’s internal credit system. Thus, students’ performance is evaluated based on the results of a modified

Grade Point Average (GPA) system and the derived Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA).

The total workload of the program constitutes 9,029 hours, of which 6,116 are contact hours, 445 are training/internship hours and 2,468 are hours of independent study. It is a full-time study program with a regular duration of five years/ten semesters. Additionally, students are required to complete the Sulaiman Al Rajhi Colleges' Preparatory Year and a non-credit bearing one-year clinical internship after completing the studies. Not including the preparatory courses, the program curriculum consists of 64 modules, of which 61 are obligatory and 3 are elective. The main language of instruction is English.

Admission requirements of the program include having graduated high school in the last three years with a grade of 90% or higher in the natural sciences group, passing an aptitude and achievement test with a grade of 75% or higher, achieving at least 63 points in the Saudi Arabian Standardized Test for English Proficiency (STEP) or passing the English placement test, passing a personal interview, and being medically fit.⁴ To progress to the program after the Preparatory Year, students require a cumulative GPA of at least 3.5 out of 5 and a TOEFL score (or equivalent) of at least 500.

The University has set tuition fees at 90,000 SAR (ca. 19,500 EUR) per year. A 30% scholarship is available to self-financed students, and further discounts are applied to family members of University staff and siblings of already enrolled students. Upon completion of the study program, students are awarded with the academic title "Medical Bachelor and Bachelor of Surgery." The male section of the program was launched in 2010, and the female section in 2016. The study program has capacities to take in up to 200 students (100 male + 100 female) per year. Currently, the University admits an annual average of 50 male and 30 to 40 female students in order to guarantee quality through controlled growth. To date, 200 male and 11 female students have enrolled in the program. Three male cohorts have already graduated.

⁴ The University states that it has placed the fitness requirement in order to prevent student, staff and patient exposure to certain infectious diseases and ailments. In clarification, it also stated that those with physical or mental disabilities will neither be blocked from studies nor from subsequent professional duties.

3.3 Expert Report

The on-site visit was carried out on February 26-27, 2018, according to the previously agreed-upon schedule. Representatives from the head office of AHPGS accompanied the expert group.

The expert group met on February 25, 2018 for preliminary talks prior to the on-site visit. They discussed the submitted application documents and the results of the written evaluation as well as questions that had been raised. Furthermore, they prepared the plan of the on-site visit at the University.

In the course of the on-site visit, experts conducted discussions with the University management, representatives of the College of Medicine, University administration, the teaching staff of the program “Medical Bachelor and Bachelor of Surgery” as well as with students currently studying in the program. Furthermore, they inspected the learning premises of the male and female section, such as lecture halls, seminar classrooms, library, and computer classes. Moreover, experts had the opportunity to see the equipment and the capacity of the laboratories.

The expert report is structured in compliance with the Accreditation Criteria of AHPGS, which were last revised on July 21, 2015 and approved by the Accreditation Commission of AHPGS on September 30, 2015. The study program will be described and analyzed in a comprehensive manner below. The documents submitted by the University, the experts’ feedback to the documents, the observations made during the on-site visit, the results of discussions with the representatives of the Sulaiman Al Rajhi Colleges, the College of Medicine and the study program serve as the basis for the statements made in the expert report.

3.3.1 Program aims and their implementation

The University itself, a non-profit institution established in 2009, has set six objectives for itself. These include meeting societal workforce needs; producing research capable of solving society’s problems and meeting its needs; encouraging sustainable development; the construction of a sound reputation that leads to international prestige; curating an educational system which ensures its own quality and provides students with both academic competence and personal development; and the provision of a university environ-

ment that fosters ethics, professional values, religious beliefs, and student ingenuity.

In accordance with the University's mission, SRC implemented a MBBS study program in order to meet the need for qualified physicians in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere who contribute to improvements in the health status of the population and to improvements of the health care system. Therefore, SRC has franchised the MBBS curriculum from Maastricht University in the Netherlands and developed it with regard to the SaudiMed Framework.

The University states that the learning objectives of the "Medical Bachelor and Bachelor of Surgery" program are based on meeting or exceeding the educational benchmarks set by the SaudiMed Framework national regulations and enabling students to comprehensively understand the Saudi healthcare system and its particularities. The MBBS study program endeavors to produce highly competent health professionals able to deliver patient- and community-centered health care by applying evidence-based methods to combat common medical problems and life-threatening ailments. Ensuring professional conduct, good communication and leadership skills in physicians as well as the adherence to Islamic, legal and ethical principles in professional practice also constitute major aims of the program. Apart from qualifying for clinical practice, the University equips students with research skills and competences in relevant information technologies.

The experts confirm that the study program focuses on specific qualification objectives. These objectives cover professional and interdisciplinary aspects and particularly refer to the domain of academic competences, competences necessary for a qualified employment, skills of social commitment and personal development.

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

3.3.2 Structure of the study program

The "Medical Bachelor and Bachelor of Surgery" program is a full-time study program with a standard duration of five years plus one preparatory year and one internship year to finalize the qualification. The program entails a course load with over 9,000 workload hours spread across 80 courses in six years (including the preparatory year) of study. Of the 80 courses, 16 belong to the preparatory year and 64 to the MBBS program itself. 61 of the courses in the

program are compulsory; three are compulsory electives to be chosen in year 2 and year 5. This study period is followed by a non-credit-bearing but obligatory one-year internship, comprising seven rotations. Hence, students require seven calendar years to fully complete the program cycle.

The MBBS program itself follows a 5-year study period. The first three years are managed by the Basic Sciences Department. It offers a total of 36 courses at 12 per year. The Clinical Sciences Department manages the remaining two years of the program and the internship year (6th year). Years 4 and 5 have 23 courses with a division of 13 and 10, respectively. While this appears a big amount of courses per year, the experts learned that these courses are organized in blocks, clusters and rotations that are only four to eight weeks (blocks), eight to ten weeks (clusters) or two to 14 weeks (rotations) in length. To the experts the structuring of the curriculum seems to make the workload manageable (see also Criterion 4). The internship year though necessary for practicing license, formally lies outside the 5-year taught program.

The first year of the MBBS program mainly focuses at normal structures and functions (anatomy and physiology) of the human body along with the basics of pathology and pharmacology. Students revisit these topics in the second year where they learn them in more depth and complexity. In the third year the complexity of the topics increases further with pathophysiology being added to learn about the behavior of body structures and their functions in diseased states. Real patients provide the learning context in the third year. In the fourth and fifth years students use their knowledge and skills acquired in their previous course of studies to diagnose and manage diseases. As a consequence, teaching in the fourth and fifth year take place mainly in hospital wards and outpatient clinics.

The experts have confirmed an innovative curriculum design and learning approach for a medical study program, taking a holistic view of medical subjects by addressing them related to the human body rather than individual systems, structures or organs. The University presents a very comprehensive medical curriculum with a combination and sequence of the courses of the study program that are consistent with the earlier described specified qualification objectives and developing the students' competences by recurring themes and topics on an introductory, proficient and advanced level through the years of study. The experts also note the importance of giving students a degree of

influence over their studies by allowing them to shift their field of specialization according to their interests, i.e. through a wider choice of relevant electives.

Throughout the five main years of the study program, students keep portfolios that function as self-analysis reports; students are also assessed on similar qualities ("Progress Test") by teachers and tutors in every year. The fifth year of the program culminates in a group research project, which produces a research article submitted for review.

Moreover, the experts commend the inclusion of longitudinal courses like "Health Law and Health Ethics", "Consultation Skills and Reflection Education" and "Professional Behavior" to supplement medical knowledge with important aspects of a comprehensive professional attitude.

As a consequence, from the experts' point of view it is assured that students are provided with specialized and interdisciplinary knowledge as well as professional, methodological and general competences.

The experts also acknowledge the very detailed course files, listing contents and aims. This allows a high level of transparency and facilitates the implementation of equal standards in the male and the female tracks of the study program.

Through the close cooperation of SRC with the University of Maastricht, the teaching staff is and has been trained in Problem-Based Learning (PBL). During the discussions on site it was shown that the teaching staff uses the PBL approach to work on and incorporate current issues and research results to their teaching.

Professional practical skills are gained through longitudinal clinical skills trainings in the first three years as well as practical hours in the College's laboratories (see also Criterion 5). However, the focus on gaining clinical practice lies on year 6, when students complete a whole internship year in cooperating hospitals which is obligatory for practicing medicine after successful completion of this period. During this year, the students complete rotations in all central medical fields, have the opportunity to emphasize on one of them and to individually choose an additional sub-specialization. Although comprising a one-year full-time workload, the final internship year is not credit-bearing as it

is not formally part of the studies but rather of the legal recognition/licensing process according to the Saudi Arabian health system.

Apart from disposing of excellently equipped skills labs (see Criterion 5), the University has signed a Training Agreement Contract with the General Directorate of Health Affairs in the Qassim Region in order to realize the clinical internships at suitable Saudi Arabian hospitals. Expectations for students' qualifications and the structure of the internships are clearly defined in the "SRC Regulations Governing the Training of Medical Interns" and the "Field Experience Specifications". The experts also appreciate that supervisors from both the University's side and the clinical setting are assigned to supervise students during their internship.

In terms of internationalization, the University runs an exchange program with Maastricht University, open for male and female students but restricted to those students who have completed at least the first year with a GPA of at least 4.5 out of 5. Such exchanges are limited to two months in duration and are fully sponsored by the University. The exchange program will become bilateral through the attendance of Maastricht University students at academic programs at the University.

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

3.3.3 Admission and Feasibility

Admission policies and procedures along with the requirements are listed in the "Requirements for admission to Preparatory Year Program (PYP) at Sulaiman Al Rajhi Colleges".

Admission requirements include having graduated high school in the last three years with a grade of 90% or higher, passing an aptitude and achievement test with a grade of 75% or higher, achieving at least 63 points in STEP or passing the English placement test, passing a personal interview, and being medically fit. The University states that it has placed the fitness requirement in order to prevent student, staff and patient exposure to certain infectious diseases and ailments. In clarification, it also stated that those with physical or mental disabilities will neither be blocked from studies nor from subsequent professional duties. The final arbiter would in many cases be a medical board at SRC. On site, it became clear that SRC treats every single case carefully with regard to possible ability to study.

To progress to the MBBS program after the Preparatory Year, students require a cumulative GPA of at least 3.5 out of 5 and a TOEFL score (or equivalent) of at least 500.

As the Preparatory Year comprises English language courses as well as foundations in medical terminology, biology, biochemistry, biostatistics, biophysics as well as in communication and IT skills which also might compensate deficiencies from secondary school, the experts determine an appropriate admission procedure and requirements that correspond to the standards of the study program. Moreover, the admission requirements are properly documented and made publicly available.

To help prepare for the difficulty and volume of exams, the type as well as the time of the different examinations is defined and communicated to the students transparently and at the beginning of the course. The experts confirm that the University takes measures to guarantee the feasibility of the study program. The amount of student workload is appropriate. As a whole, the organization of the education process ensures the successful implementation of the study program.

Students have access to their instructors for at least four hours per week, as office hours. On site, it became obvious that, in addition, the teaching staff follows an “open-door-policy”. Alongside this, a mentoring system within the portfolio program allows students to help one another through difficulties in portfolio compilation and other issues, and allows the teaching staff to monitor and discuss continually the student’s learning and development process. Students in need of psychological or psychiatric support can receive free professional help through the University’s Counselling Unit. In the first week of each year, students and instructors alike undergo an orientation which familiarizes them with available support services.

The experts find the support services at the University to be exemplary and conducive to the health and success of the student body.

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

3.3.4 Examination system and transparency

The College uses a continuous assessment process to ensure the quality of education for its students, requiring continuous assignments, portfolio entries

and final examinations. Assessment methods include multiple-choice questions, essays, short answer questions, quizzes, individual and group assignments, oral exams, portfolio preparations, presentations, miscellaneous projects and Objective Structured Clinical Exams (OSCE). To carry out OSCE, SRC often invites teachers from the neighboring Qassim University in order to guarantee independent assessment.

The experts appreciate this diversity of assessment methods and particularly acknowledge the portfolio and mentorship programs well as the guidance of “professional behavior” in place which allow an alternative view on performance and personal development of the students. The experts find that the students’ competence is well-assessed in the program’s examination process, as is their professional readiness and autonomy.

The credit requirement for graduation is the attainment (with a GPA of at least 2.0 out of 5) of 234 Credit Hours, each of which corresponds to 50 theoretical/laboratory minutes or 100 practical/field work minutes. There is no traditional thesis at the end of the program.

Resit exams are held at the end of each academic year. Generally, a course will have at least one resit per year, preferably within the same academic year as the course failed by the student.

The examination system is well documented and made transparently available to the students in the “Student’s Handbook”. Moreover, the College has presented a variety of templates that document properly the assessment of students, such as the Mini Clinical Evaluation Exercise (Mini-CEX) Form, the Case Based Discussion (CBD) Form, the Intern Competency Assessment Form or the Directly Observed Procedural Skills (DOPS) Form.

The “Student’s Handbook” also contains regulations to manage the transfer of students from other universities or colleges, from colleges within SRC and of students who change specialization within the college.

As a whole, the experts conclude that the examination system applied in the MBBS study program serves to determine whether the envisaged qualification objectives have been achieved. These examinations are focused on students’ knowledge and competences. The requirements to students’ performance in examinations are regulated and published. The frequency of examinations, as well as their organization, is appropriate.

Not within the domain of SRC lies the obligatory National Licensing Examination of the Saudi Commission of Health Specialties, that every graduate has to pass after the internship year in order to be recognized for practicing as physicians in Saudi Arabia.

Moreover, SRC showed convincingly that it considers it obligatory to make reasonable modifications and adjustments for applicants to the medical program with disabilities as well as existing students who might develop disabilities during the course of studies, where the disability or infirmity would not prevent students from achieving the required academic standards to graduate or to carry out their professional duties thereafter.

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

3.3.5 Teaching staff and material equipment

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

In general, the "Medical Bachelor and Bachelor of Surgery" program employs a large number of qualified and committed staff members that is still continuingly extended. There are 37 full-time teaching staff in the "MBBS" program, including four professors, four associate professors, 16 assistant professors and 13 lecturers. As the female track of the program recently started in 2016 and has not reached its full capacity yet, especially the female teaching staff is continuously growing according to the cohorts.

To compensate, the College has infrastructure and technology in place that allows female students to attend classes of male teachers. Moreover, SRC has a signed agreement with the neighboring Qassim University that covers the provision of part-time teachers, consultations and collaboration in research projects.

Moreover, the experts find the rigid regulations pertaining to the hiring and retention of teaching staff to be favorable; teaching quality is ensured in that instructors require at least a "Very Good" grade on their Master's degree, and advancement to Associate Professor and Professor requires a combination of

experience and credentials. The hiring process engages in checks and balances with the Department Council, College Council and the Board of Trustees.

A unit of the University, viz. the Health Professions Education (HPE) Unit, heads the professional development and training programs for the study program staff. The University's partnership with the University of Maastricht is also used to offer additional education opportunities to staff; this includes a mandatory six-month qualification on pedagogic methodologies for all incoming instructors.

The experts appreciate the University's efforts and its success in establishing a complete, highly qualified and sustainable teaching body, despite the modest lack of specialists in the country. As a consequence, the department benefits now from a highly engaged international faculty, commanding an appropriate level of English for teaching. As research performance also affects the appraisal of contract renewal, it became obvious that SRC and the teaching staff also put high emphasis on research activities. A "Research Unit" at the College holds monthly meetings, implemented a journal club with students, participates in a regional "Research Day" and promotes cooperation with hospitals for clinical research.

The experts acknowledge the incentives and possibilities that are given to the teaching staff and emphasize the importance of serving the "three pillars" as a teacher in a medical program to guarantee a modern medical curriculum: teaching, clinical practice and research. The experts are impressed by the fast development and the impressive results reached by the College within a relatively short period of time and conclude that this was only possible with a high engagement and commitment of the teaching staff and supportive management. With regard to the further development to be expected, the experts recommend to always consider the named three basic pillars (teaching, clinical practice and research).

As a whole, the experts confirm that professionalism and a sufficient number of human resources assure the successful implementation of the study program. The teaching staff within the MBBS program is in possession of academic and technical credentials and experience adequate to their jobs. The University informs its employees about opportunities for personal and professional development in clear ways, and actively encourages their participation in workshops, training courses, and conferences intended to further their abil-

ity which is confirmed during the talks with the staff on site. Recruitment and appointment of teaching positions are appropriate.

On site, the experts were shown around the College's premises. The College of Medicine is the first college to operate within a huge project that comprises a campus of 1.12 million square meters and planning, alongside various additional colleges, an own 300-beds university hospital, a central library, housing for teaching staff and students, an own power plant, a mosque and a stadium. Male and female students do not study on separated campuses but in separate buildings, accessing the same laboratories.

The experts were impressed with the quality of the laboratories and clinical areas used to train students in the MBBS program. The College disposes skills labs on the one hand as well as histology, pharmacology and anatomy labs on the other hand. This is the only area the experts determined room for improvement. From the experts' perspectives, especially the quality of learning material in the anatomy lab could be improved by modern preserved anatomical and histological specimen that allow a more realistic and detailed insight to the human body and human organs. Especially by facing the difficulty to always source enough human cadavers, the experts also recommend to think about including new technologies, such as "virtual anatomy" in order to guarantee high quality teaching in the anatomy lab.

The College's library offers room for individual studies and provides the most basic literature as printed books. On site, the experts learned that the main part of specialized literature is provided through an impressive number of electronic books, supplemented by databases and e-magazines. As a whole, it was ascertained by the experts that the MBBS program has ample available teaching facilities at its disposal. The infrastructure and the equipment are suitable to guarantee teaching and research.

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

3.3.6 Quality assurance

The University's 2012 Strategic Plan set forth its Quality Management System (QMH), which operates according to the Quality Management Handbook. SRC's quality management system (QMS) documents all processes, procedures, and responsibilities for achieving quality policies and objectives with

the purpose of ensuring coordinated and standardized patterns of implementation. The Planning, Development and Quality Administration (PDQA) is the chief quality assurance entity of the University, and carries the responsibility of assisting University units and departments to improve, self-evaluate and be transparent. In addition, a Central Quality Committee (CQC) consisting of representatives of all major academic departments and units works closely with the PDQA in quality assurance processes. The central objective of the QMS is Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI).

For the purposes of assessing performance, the University uses benchmarks from the Saudi National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA), comparable institutions from around the nation and the world, and independent evaluators. Using these, the University has set Key Performance Indicators (KPI) on institutional and program levels. Also, the University states that students play a central role in the quality assurance feedback process; the Assessment Unit and the requisite course coordinator conduct a feedback session after each exam; student representatives participate in every board meeting. An electronic evaluation platform, Qualtrics, is used.

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

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

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

3.3.7 Gender equality and equal opportunities

Since 2016, the "Medical Bachelor and Bachelor of Surgery" program has both female and male students and assures that it provides equal admission, education, examination and participation opportunities for both groups of students. The University demonstrates its commitment to the provision of equal opportunities for all students, within the cultural boundaries of the local

society, and shows impressive openness for diversity and social developments.

The new college buildings with a female and a male campus, and a common laboratory section in between, allows a maximum of communication, exchange and collaboration between both campuses while accepting and taking care of cultural, national and religious reality.

On site, the experts learned that SRC's students come from close to 50 different countries, mostly from the MENA region, Africa and southern and southeastern Asia and far outnumber students from Saudi Arabia. As SRC is a private university, students have to pay tuition fees. On site, the University presents its extensive scholarship system that provides scholarships and need based financial aid for exceptionally talented Saudi and non-Saudi students, such as the Sheikh Sulaiman Al Rajhi Scholarship, the Academic Excellence Scholarship, and other rebates and grants for siblings and children of staff members. Moreover, SRC runs an International Talent Development Program. Lately, students from Ghana and Indonesia have been admitted and received a full scholarship covering tuition fees, airfare, full board and lodging.

Information on scholarship programs are transparently published and described on SRC's website as well as advertised throughout the University building.

However, expatriate students reported difficulties in being admitted as physicians for the Saudi Arabian labor market what forces them to apply in other and/or their home countries. While this, being a national procedure, lies out of SRC's control and, in the meantime, complies with SRC's mission to qualify health care professionals to support the development of indigent societies, the students wish for more information and support for applying and recognition procedures abroad. From the experts' point of view this a students' wish worthy to support in order to guarantee employability and possibilities for the students' further professional development.

As a whole, the experts got the impression that SRC offers a very favorable learning surrounding, trying to meet the individual needs and living circumstances of every student.

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

3.4 Summary

The overall impression of the University is very positive. The Sulaiman Al Rajhi Colleges presents itself convincingly as an open-minded and dynamic higher education institution with willingness to import new ideas and recommendations for further enhancement. Within a relatively short period of time the University has shown an impressive development while prioritizing qualitative results before quantitative achievements. The University shows a strong commitment to social issues, to the development of societies through educating young professionals and to supporting talented students from all over the world regardless of nationality, gender or religion.

Sulaiman Al Rajhi Colleges have gained Maastricht University as a strong strategic cooperation partner. The functioning as well as the benefits of this cooperation for staff and students have become obvious on site.

As a whole, a number of additional favorable characteristics and achievements of the study program were demonstrated by the management of the University, the representatives of the college, those of the department as well as of the student body, such as a highly-motivated and highly-qualified teaching team well-versed in multiple specialties, a comprehensive and innovative curriculum, a close guidance of the students' educational process and an excellent infrastructure.

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 "Medical Bachelor and Bachelor of Surgery" offered at the Sulaiman Al Rajhi Colleges fulfills the above-described criteria. Hence, the experts decided to submit a recommendation to the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS for a positive decision regarding the accreditation of the study program.

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

- The development of the curriculum should take into account the three basic pillars: clinical practice, research and teaching.
- The quality of learning material in the anatomy lab should be improved by modern preserved anatomical and histological specimen. Including

new technologies, such as “virtual anatomy”, should be considered in order to guarantee high quality teaching in the anatomy lab.

- The University should provide more information and support for applying and recognition procedures abroad.

4 Decision of the accreditation commission

The decision of the Accreditation Commission of May 15, 2018

This resolution of the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS is based on the University's application, as well as the expert review and the on-site visit covered in the expert report. The Accreditation Commission has also taken the response opinion of the University regarding the study program into account.

The on-site visit of the University took place on February 26-27, 2018, according to the previously agreed-upon 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 of the University regarding the expert report.

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

The study program requires the obtainment of 234 credit hours (CH) according to the University's credit hour system. The regulated study period in the program "Medical Bachelor and Bachelor of Surgery" are six years (12 semesters), including a Preparatory Year, followed by a non-credit bearing one-year clinical internship after completing the studies. The study program comprises 80 mandatory courses, of which 16 belong to the Preparatory Year, 61 are compulsory and three are electives. The main language of instruction is English. The Bachelor study program "Medical Bachelor and Bachelor of Surgery" is completed with awarding of the academic degree "Medical Bachelor and Bachelor of Surgery."

The study program "Medical Bachelor and Bachelor of Surgery" is accredited for the duration of five years, until September 30, 2023.

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