

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



Assessment Report

**for the Application of
King Abdul-Aziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia,
Faculty of Applied Medical Sciences,
Physical Therapy Department,
for the Accreditation of the Bachelor Study Program
“Physical Therapy”
(Bachelor of Science in Physical Therapy)**

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Table of contents

1	Introduction into the accreditation procedure	4
2	Overview	7
2.1	Procedure-related documents	7
2.2	Study program	8
2.2.1	Structural data of the study program	8
2.2.2	Qualification objectives and employment opportunities.....	10
2.2.3	Modularization and exam system	11
2.2.4	Admission requirements.....	19
2.3	Study conditions and quality assurance	20
2.3.1	Human resources	20
2.3.2	Facilities	22
2.3.3	Quality assurance.....	23
2.4	Institutional context	25
3	Expert report	27
3.1	Preliminary remarks	27
3.2	Basic information about the study program	30
3.3	Expert report	31
3.3.0	Introduction and comprehensive remarks	32
3.3.1	Program aims and learning outcomes.....	33
3.3.2	Curriculum design	35
3.3.3	Staff.....	37
3.3.4	Facilities and learning resources	39
3.3.5	Study process and student assessment.....	40
3.3.6	Program management.....	44
3.4	Summary	46
4	Decision of the accreditation commission	50

1 Introduction into the accreditation procedure

King Abdul-Aziz University, Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has assigned the Accreditation Agency in Health and Social Science (hereinafter, the AHPGS) to implement the accreditation procedure of study programs.

The AHPGS is an interdisciplinary and multi-professional organization. Its mission is to evaluate and accredit bachelor and master programs in the fields of health and social sciences as well as in related domains.

Since 2004, the AHPGS is a member of the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA). In 2006, the AHPGS joined the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA); in 2009, it became a full member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). Since 2012, the AHPGS is a member of the Network of Central and Eastern European Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA). Starting from 2009, the AHPGS is listed in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR). The AHPGS is accredited by the German Accreditation Council (currently until 2019).

The accreditation criteria of the AHPGS are the basis for the accreditation decision. These criteria can be found on the webpage of the AHPGS¹. 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 decision regarding the accreditation of each study program of King Abdul-Aziz University is carried out by the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS based on the following accreditation criteria:

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

¹ Visit the website of the AHPGS: <http://ahpgs.de/english/program-accreditation/>

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

II. Written review regarding the content of the program

Parallel to the first step, 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. Consequently, the experts comprise a short summary regarding the study program.

III. On-site visit (peer-review)

The experts carry out an on-site visit at the University. In the course of the visit, they hold discussions with various members of the University, including the University and the department administration, the program management, teachers and students. These discussions provide the experts with details about the study program beyond the written documents. The task of the expert group in 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 an expert report for each study program. The expert report is based on the results of the visit, the written review of the study program and the documents submitted by the University. The expert reports are made available to the University for it to issue a response opinion.

The expert report, as well as the University's response opinion – together with the submitted documents – is submitted to the accreditation commission of the AHPGS for the final decision, which is formulated in three ways: accreditation, accreditation with conditions or denial of accreditation.

IV. The AHPGS decision regarding the accreditation

The accreditation commission of the AHPGS examines the documentation made available, namely the University's application, its annexes, the summary of the program, the expert report as well as the University's response opinion. These documents represent the basis for the decision regarding the accreditation of the study program by the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS.

2 Overview

2.1 Procedure-related documents

The contract between the King Abdul-Aziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, (hereinafter “the University”) and the AHPGS was signed on 3 September 2014. The University submitted the program’s Self-Evaluation Report and other relevant documents to the AHPGS in electronic format on 25 September 2014. The AHPGS forwarded open questions and explanatory notes (hereinafter OQ) pertaining to the Self-Evaluation Report and its annexes to the University on 16 February 2015. On 11 March 2015, the University submitted the answers to the open questions and explanatory notes (hereinafter AOQ) to the AHPGS.

This document presents the summary and the assessment of the bachelor study program “Physical Therapy”.

The application documentation submitted by the University follows the outline recommended by the AHPGS. Together with the Self-Evaluation Report, the University provided the following documents specific for the program:

Annex	Description
1	Program description
2	Course description
3	Module overview
4	Course overview
5	Study plan
6	Time table
7	CV of the teaching staff
8	Physical Therapy Department description
9	Student survey statistics
10	Physiotherapy Intern Logbook of King Abdul-Aziz University
11	Intern evaluation form

Table 1. Documents specific for the program “Physical Therapy”

Alongside the program-specific documents, the following documents pertain to all study programs submitted by the University for accreditation:

Annex	Description
A	King Abdul-Aziz University student charter of rights and duties
B	Mechanisms of students’ admission in faculties and departments after the preparation year
C	King Abdul-Aziz University regulations for examinations and transfer from one university to another
D	Teaching staff appointment regulations
E	Declaration about equipment provision

Table 2. Documents common for all study programs submitted for accreditation

The Self-Evaluation Report, 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 standards agreed within the University.

2.2 Study program

2.2.1 Structural data of the study program

University	King Abdul-Aziz University
Faculty/Department	Faculty of Applied Medical Sciences Physical Therapy Department
Title of the study program	“Physical Therapy”
Degree awarded	Bachelor of Science in Physical Therapy
Language of instruction	English
Form of studies	Full-time
Organizational structure	Sunday – Thursday
Period of education	4 years (8 semesters) + 1 year (12 months) of internship
Evaluation of the program according to the University system of ‘study units’	137 study units
Study units ² /hours	1 study unit = 1 lecture hour 1 study unit = 2 practical class hours 1 study unit= 2 clinical practice hours 0 study unit = 1 tutorial hour
Study units for the final paper/ final research project	2 study units
Beginning of the study program	Academic year 2005-2006
Time of admission	Annually from June to August
Male/female students	Male and female
Number of available places on the program in 2014/2015	100
Number of enrolled students in the academic year 2014/2015	91 (54 female students and 37 male students)
Number of graduates	28 (16 female students and 12 male students)

² The number of study units is determined by the amount of contact hours per week.

in the academic year 2013/2014	
Particular enrollment conditions	<p>For the preparatory year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General secondary school certificate or equivalent - General Aptitude Test (“Qudrat”) - General Achievement Test (“Tahseely”) <p>For the department:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Completion of the preparatory year - Medical investigation - Interview by the department admission committee
Tuition fees	No fees for students; all expenses are covered by the Ministry of Higher Education.

Table 3. Structural data of the program “Physical Therapy”

As other study programs offered at King Abdul-Aziz University, the program “Physical Therapy” consists of three types of courses:

- University requirement courses; they are obligatory for all students enrolled at the University and are taught mainly in the second and third years of study in the program.
- Faculty requirement courses; they are obligatory for students of a certain faculty and specialization and are usually offered in the preparatory year and also at the beginning of the second year of studies.

These two types are offered by or in association with other programs, departments, and faculties of the University.

- Department requirement courses; they are specific for the program and are taught by the teaching staff of the Department.

All students enrolled at the University have to complete the first year of studies, which is also called *the preparatory year*. This initial period prepares students for further specialization in the chosen sphere of health care services. The preparatory year takes place in the premises of the Faculty of Science, whereas for the other three years students are engaged at the Faculty of Applied Medical Sciences. According to the University, the preparatory year entails two tracks or directions with equal share of the study load: scientific and humanistic. Students planning to pursue their studies in the Faculty of Applied Medical Sciences, have to register for the scientific track (AOQ 7).

Clinical practice starts in the first half of the 3rd year and is then taught each semester until the end of the program. Upon completion of all academic courses and acquisition of 137 credits, students can start the obligatory internship at a hospital.

The final internship in the fifth year can be implemented either at the University Hospital or in a number of other health care institutions, such as King Fahd General Hospital, King Faisal Specialty Hospital and Research Centre, Disabled Children Association, National Guard, Abdul-Latif Jameel and El-Nour Hospitals (Self-Evaluation Report 1.2.1). If students want to do their internship at a health care center other than the University Hospital, they have to submit a signed application together with the conformation of the hosting institute as well as a list of complementary documents (for details, see AOQ 25).

Students graduate from the program and receive the title 'Bachelor of Science in Physical Therapy' after they have obtained all obligatory 137 study units, completed all courses with the minimum grade "D" (60% of performance) or better and successfully accomplished the internship year (Annex 8, page 4).

2.2.2 Qualification objectives and employment opportunities

The main objective of the program "Physical Therapy" is to train specialists to plan and implement proper techniques and procedures of Physical Therapy according to the needs and health conditions of a patient. The mission of the program is to prepare graduates who can meet the local, regional and international needs in the field of Physical Therapy (Annex 1). The program strives to provide a balanced education with an equal attention to academic courses and clinical training. The academic part contains theoretical and practical laboratory classes organized at the University premises, whereas the second clinical part is carried out within clinical settings.

By the end of their studies, graduates are expected to be able to acquire the following professional qualifications (Self-Evaluation Report, 1.3.2):

- to delineate the functional problems and secondary complications of each disorder,
- to judge the outcomes of physical therapy interventions based on anatomical and physiological criteria,
- to determine adequate treatment methods of various disorders,
- to apply evaluation and treatment techniques acquired in practical laboratory classes,
- to apply principles of patient safety and protection acquired through laboratory and clinical training,
- to design a treatment plan in physical therapy,
- to perform a broad literature review on a selected research topic,
- to implement a research project based on a methodological approach.

With regard to cognitive skills and the qualifications for personal growth, the program aims at developing skills of critical thinking and problem solving in clinical settings and of evidence-based evaluation and treatment. The program claims to pay a lot of attention to the development of communication skills necessary for successful interaction with colleges and patients. The goal of the program is also to enable students to conduct scientific research and encourage them to adopt the approach of continuous education and professional growth. The program claims to cultivate the qualifications of social responsibility in its student.

The program “Physical Therapy” has been introduced in order to meet the growing demand for the respective specialists in the country. The data about the shortage of specialists in this sphere is provided by the Saudi Ministry of Health. At the moment, there are 394 physical specialists practicing in Saudi Arabia, whereas this number should constitute 1,229 based on the calculation of one therapist per 1,000 inhabitants. The University has submitted a chart with the actual and the required number of therapists in different areas of the country (AOQ, Annex 4).

Graduates of the programs are expected to find employment in university hospitals (such as the Hospital of King Abdul-Aziz University) in the hospitals of the Ministry of Health, military hospitals, rehabilitation facilities (such as Abdulatif Gamil Rehabilitation Center), private clinics, sport clubs and private schools (Self-Evaluation Report 1.4.2). Furthermore, graduates of the program can continue postgraduate studies abroad; the University offers scholarships for that purpose. The master level of the program is in the process of implementation (AOQ 73).

The Faculty of Applied Medical Sciences has initiated the concept of the Alumni Unit, whose function is to maintain contact with its graduate students and to continuously update the information on their professional development. Thus, the Alumni Unit conducts an annual survey where students are requested to inform about their current position (working, studying or neither), and provide further relevant details (see the Alumni Survey in AOQ, Annex 1).

According to the survey results obtained from the program graduates, approximately 10% of them are employed as instructors at King Abdul-Aziz University and King Saud University for Health Sciences, whereas 85% are working as physical therapists in governmental, private and military health care institutions (AOQ 71).

2.2.3 Modularization and exam system

The regulated study period in the bachelor’s degree program “Physical Therapy” is 4 years (8 semesters) followed by 1 year of clinical practice. One semester lasts for 15 weeks followed by 3 weeks for examinations; the first semester of an aca-

demical year includes the period from September to January and the second semester includes the period from January to June. In total, the program consists of 54 courses³, of which 32 (59%) are program specific courses, 12 (22%) are faculty requirements courses and 10 (19%) are university requirements courses. Among faculty requirement courses, 5 are obligatory whereas 7 are elective courses (Self-Evaluation Report 1.2.1).

By the end of their studies, students have to acquire 137 credit units, of which 88 are awarded for the department requirement courses, 22 for faculty requirement courses and 27 for university requirement courses (Self-Evaluation Report 1.1.4).

The first year of studies (the preparatory year) comprises introductory courses in Biology, Physics, and Chemistry. Furthermore, the objective of this year is to solidify and broaden students' knowledge of English language, as well as to provide them with additional skills in computer science, statistics, and communication. The preparatory year consists of the university and faculty requirement courses, which are assembled according to the requirements of further specialization (Self-Evaluation Report, 1.2.2). The Faculty of Sciences is responsible for the courses of the preparatory year.

Preparatory year				
Sem.	Course title	Th.	Pr.	Cr.
1	General Mathematics	3	-	3
	General Physics	3	-	3
	English Language (1)	3	-	3
	Introduction to Computers	3	-	3
Total:		12	0	12
2	General Statistics	3	-	3
	General Chemistry	3	-	3
	English language (2)	3	-	3
	General Biology	3	-	3
	Communication Skills	3	-	3
Total:		15	0	15
Study units for activities in:				
Th.- theory; Pr.- practice; Cr.- total amount of study units in one course				

Table 4: Preparatory year courses (1st year of studies)

³ When compared to the European system of modularization, the University allocates credits to each course individually, therefore it is recommended to use the term 'course' instead of 'module' in this procedure, though 54 program courses can be grouped into a number of modules based on the departments offering these courses.

The following three years of the program focus on specialization courses. At the same time students continue attending the mandatory and selective university and the faculty requirement courses (Annex 5):

Sem.	Course title	Th.	Pr.	Cr.
3	Anatomy 1	2	1	3
	Physiology 1	2	1	3
	Biochemistry	2	-	2
	Therapeutic Exercises 1	2	1	3
	Tests and Measurements 1	2	1	3
	Electrotherapy 1	2	1	3
	Hydrotherapy	1	1	2
	Arabic Language 1	3	-	3
	Islamic Culture 1	2	-	2
Total:		18	6	24
4	Anatomy 2	2	1	3
	Physiology 2	2	1	3
	Therapeutic Exercises 2	2	1	3
	Tests and Measurements 2	2	1	3
	Electrotherapy 2	2	1	3
	Biomechanics	2	1	3
	Arabic Language 2	3	-	3
	Islamic Culture 2	2	-	2
Total:		17	6	23
5	Cardiopulmonary PT	3	1	4
	Geriatrics PT	1	1	2
	Clinical Cardiopulmonary PT	0	3	3
	Pathology	2	-	2
	Pharmacology	2	-	2
	Exercise Physiology	2	1	3
	Islamic Culture 3	2	-	2
Total:		12	6	18
6	Orthopedic PT	3	1	4
	Sports Injuries PT	1	1	2
	Clinical Orthopedic PT	0	3	3
	Prostheses and Orthoses	1	1	2
	Radiology	2	1	3
	Psychology	2	-	2
	Islamic Culture	2	-	2
Total:		11	7	18
	Pediatric PT	3	1	4

7	Growth and Development	2	-	2
	Clinical Pediatric PT	0	3	3
	Woman Health PT	2	1	3
	Wound Care PT	1	1	2
Total:		8	6	14
8	Neurology PT	3	1	4
	Neurosurgery PT	1	1	2
	Clinical Neurology PT	0	3	3
	Research Project	1	1	2
	Management in PT	2	-	2
Total:		7	6	13
Total amount if study units for the whole program:				137
Study units for activities in:				
Th.- theory; Pr.- practice; Cr.- total amount of study units in one course				

Table 5: Overview of the main study period of the program "Physical therapy"

Annex 2 contains a detailed description of each course included into the curriculum of the program. This description covers the following aspects: course title, credit hours, faculties responsible for the course, pre-requisites to be admitted to the course, objectives, lecture topics timetable, practical topics timetable, course components, knowledge and skills to be acquired, methods of student assessment, and learning resources.

Apart from courses designed particularly for the specialty of "Physical Therapy", the program includes also the university requirement courses that are mandatory for all students of the University and the faculty requirement courses that are mandatory for all students of the Faculty of Applied Medical Sciences. Hence, the university requirement courses, such as *Islamic Studies* and *Arabic language* are offered by the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, whereas *Computer Science* is offered by the College of Computing and Information Technology. Among the faculty requirement faculties, *Anatomy*, *Physiology*, *Biochemistry*, *Pharmacology*, *Pathology* and other are taught in cooperation with the Faculty of Medicine, while *Physics*, *Biology*, *Chemistry* and *Mathematics* are taught by the Faculty of Sciences (AOQ 63).

According to the Self-Evaluation Report 1.2.9, the Department of Physical Therapy collaborates with some universities from Turkey in terms of updates and development of the program structure, which however does not involve student exchange processes. When designing the program curriculum, the Department refers to the structure of similar programs offered by King Saud University, and it also consults with the standards of the American Physical Therapy Association (AOQ 64, 65).

The Department ensures to achieve the objectives of both program-specific courses and those studied together with other units of the University by means of discussions of learning objectives and examination measures with other departments during various meetings. Furthermore, the Department of Physical Therapy prepares course portfolios and annual academic reports. Students are required to participate in course evaluation surveys at the end of each semester (see the forms of student evaluation surveys in AOQ, Annex 1). Efficiency and suitability of the program objectives and learning outcomes are ensured also by the fact that the program is regularly evaluated by an Advisory Committee consisting of representatives of health care institutions hiring the program graduates, female and male students' representatives and also members of the Physical Therapy Department (AOQ 58).

Didactic concepts and methods of teaching used in the program include theoretical lectures, laboratory classes, clinical sessions, oral presentations, seminars, and a research project (Self-Evaluation project 1.2.4 and Annex 2). Concerning the integration of electronic and multimedia forms of instruction and learning, it is stated that the teaching staff of the program uses overhead projectors; data show equipment, smart boards, video sets and LCD screens (Self-Evaluation Report 1.2.5).

Practical/clinical experience constitutes a considerable part of the study program structure and is integrated in the program in the 3rd and 4th year of studies through clinical practice courses in Cardiopulmonary, Orthopedics, Pediatrics and Neurology. Each of these courses is worth of 3 study units.

Students of the program are engaged in research in the second semester of the 4th year of studies through the course Research Project. Students obtain 2 study units upon completion of the course. Its objective is to teach the principles and procedures of a scientific research and of working independently as well as in a team. The project involves a focus on a specific research topic or question, location and review of the relevant literature, planning of the research procedure, collection and evaluation of research data, practical implementation, and reading of various types of similar research reports (Annex 1 and 2). Upon completion of the course, students are encouraged to conduct a research project and write a report about the work they have performed or make a poster for the annual meeting of Applied Medical Sciences students. The list of research projects completed in the academic year 2010/2011 is presented in the Self-Evaluation Report, section 1.2.7.

After the completion of all courses and study requirements, students can begin their clinical internship year (12 months) either at the University Hospital or other

health care institutions approved by the University. The internship year consists of 4 rotations in Orthopedics and Traumatology, Pediatrics, Neurology and the last in Cardiopulmonary Disorders. Each of them lasts for 3 months. The internship year starts at the beginning of August and ends by July of the next year. Students work for 5 days a week, 8 hours a day. They are guided by senior hospital supervisors and the academic staff of the Department, including the internship coordinator and the head of the Physical Therapy Department (AOQ 68).

The *Intern Logbook* of the Physical Therapy Department contains information on the regulations, structure, evaluation methods and requirements of each rotation of the internship year (AOQ 67 and also see AOQ, Annex 4). Each student holds an internship logbook where the hospital supervisor indicates whether an intern has acquired the skills intended in every training rotation or not. Besides, it contains each student's attendance record, a list of seminars and symposiums given and attended by an intern as well as vacation periods taken during the internship (Annex 10). By the end of their training graduates are expected to be able to plan, implement and evaluate proper physical therapy procedures and maintain accurate report on them, to use different tools and equipment necessary for patient treatment, to identify pathological changes and related clinical features as a result of medical and surgical treatment (for more details, see AOQ 67).

With regard to evaluation methods, students' performance is assessed by the hospital supervisors at the end of each rotation in terms of 'yes' (the requirement/competence is achieved) or 'no' (the requirements/competence is not achieved (see the evaluation forms in AOQ, Annex 4). These evaluation results are then submitted to the department internship coordinator. Final grades for the internship are assigned to students in the form of 'pass' or 'fail'; students with the total pass grade lower than 60% will have to repeat the whole or a part of the internship year, depending on the decision of the University Internship Committee. The *Intern Evaluation Form* serves as an official document confirming that students completed their internship year (Annex 11).

The correlation between the internship outcomes and the learning objectives of the program is maintained with the help of the Intern Logbook and evaluation forms included in it. Furthermore, it is ensured by the fact that there are several bodies involved in the supervision of students' progress during the internship: the department chairman, the department internship coordinator and the hospital supervisor.

Quality of the internship period is said to be maintained by supervisors with a bachelor or master degree in Physical Therapy. Supervisors evaluate students' performance during the internship and send monthly reports to the Faculty of Ap-

plied Sciences with a list of learning and practice outcomes students have achieved (AOQ, Annex 4). Furthermore, internship supervisors have monthly meetings with the internship coordinator from the Faculty in order to discuss the training-relevant issues.

The program states to implement a skill-oriented examination system that complies with the intended educational objectives and outcomes. Course instructors are responsible for the preparation of the final examinations taken at the end of each course. According to the University's regulations, the Faculty Board has the right to determine the examiner, with the recommendation of the Head of the Department (Annex C, Art.33).

The following evaluation methods of student's performance are applied in the program: written quizzes, practical exams, oral presentations, written assignments, tests, essays, and home assignments. These methods can be grouped into two kinds of knowledge assessment procedures:

- Continuous assessments methods, such as assignments, in-class activities, written quizzes, presentations, and case-studies carried out during the semester, namely in the fifth, eighth and tenth week.
- Final examinations, which are carried out at the end of each semester and which usually consist of 1 written exam, and 1 practical exam held after the 15th week of the semester.

The percentage ratio of continuous and final assessments varies from 40 to 60%, depending on the course requirements (for details see Annex 2).

Furthermore, the students have to pass clinical exams, which are taken in the 3rd and primarily in the 4th year of studies and are conducted during the regular examination periods. Clinical exams are prepared by course instructors; completion of these exams is required for the completion of the whole course AOQ 9).

According to the University examination regulations (Annex C), students can be allowed to complete the course requirements in the following semester upon the recommendation of the course instructor and the subsequent approval of the Department Council. In that case, students' academic record for the course is temporarily estimated as 'incomplete' (IC) and is only added to the GPA (grade point average) after they have completed the course. If students do not manage to complete the course, their record for the course will be estimated as 'fail' (F).

Re-examinations or reset examinations take place once a year before the first semester of the following academic year, in other words in late August. In contrast to the regular way of calculating students final grade for a course (40% for contin-

uous evaluations and 60% for final exams), results of re-examination determine students' grade to 100%. Furthermore, regardless of students' achievements in the re-examination, they can only obtain the grade D (acceptable), which correspond to 60% of performance (AOQ 10).

As the University indicates, if students fail in several courses, they are allowed to take re-set examinations and if they fail these exams, students have to repeat the course. If students fail again, they have a chance to take one more re-set exam, failure of which will be followed by the exclusion from the University. Hence, every student has 4 attempts to pass any course of the program (AOQ 8).

The University states that all students have the right to appeal with regard to examination results. In that case, they should, first, approach the course instructor and look at the exam together. If students still disagree with the grade, they can refer to the Head of the Department, who will then assign a member of the department to reassess their examination (AOQ 11).

Students' academic performance in the program "Physical Therapy" is evaluated according to the following grading scale applied at the University:

Estimate	Code	Rate from 5	Rate from 4
Super Excellent	A+	5.00	4.00
Excellent	A	4.75	3.75
Super Very Good	B+	4.50	3.50
Very Good	B	4.00	3.00
Super Good	C+	3.50	2.50
Good	C	3.00	2.00
Super Accepted	D+	2.50	1.50
Acceptable	D	2.00	1.00
Failed	F	1.00	0.00

Table 6: Grading scale

The Department of Physical Therapy underlines that the percentage rate, for example of the grade B (very good) can be different depending on whether it is calculated out of 5 or 4. Therefore, these rates should be unified.

As for the aspect of compensation measures for students with disabilities and chronic illnesses, it is stated that physical fitness is one of the admission requirements of the program because students are expected to lift patients and handle equipment. Students with learning difficulties can receive support from the Department of Students' Education Affairs and from the academic staff in tutorial sessions (Self-Evaluation Report 1.2.3).

2.2.4 Admission requirements

There are two admission procedures at the University: first, students apply for a place in the preparatory year and, second, they apply for a place in one of the programs of the Faculty of Applied Medical Sciences. Admission to the Faculty means that students automatically continue their education in the 2nd year of the program (by that time, students have already finished the 1st year of studies in the preparatory year). Both procedures take place in the time period from June to August.

In order to be admitted to the preparatory year at the University, applicants have to submit a general secondary school certificate or an equivalent and their scores in two standard national exams:

- General Aptitude Test (“Qudrat”) measures critical thinking skills
- General Achievement Test (“Tahseely”) measures knowledge in Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology and English Language

Applicants are admitted to the preparatory year based on their achievements in these tests. The total score of an applicant is calculated according to the following percentage distribution of scores: 50% is defined by the school certificate grade, 25% by the score in the general aptitude test and 25% by the score in the achievement test. The preparatory year enrollment conditions are regulated by the University Deanship of Admission and Registration and the College.

To be admitted to the Faculty, in other words to the second year of the program, students have to complete the preparatory year with an average grade not lower than 2.00 out of 4.00. Furthermore, students need to show interest in working in a hospital environment and in dealing with patients. Finally, they have to pass the medical investigation, meaning that students must declare whether they suffer from contagious diseases, diabetic disorders and whether they have any restrictions in physical abilities, which might prevent them from fulfilling the requirements of the study program. The same admission regulation applies to foreign students as well (AOQ 3).

Students' Admission to the Faculty is determined by three factors: 1) competition based on students' average grade for the preparatory year, 2) enrollment capacity of the Faculty, and 3) by the admission standards of the Faculty Board (Annex B). Students have to apply through the University e-service system “ODUS PLUS” within a given period of time after the completion of the preparatory year.

According to the requirements of the Faculty of Applied Medical Sciences, male students are admitted to the program with the grade 4.00 – 5.00 and female stu-

dents with the grade 4.50 – 5.00. Such a difference in the admission grade is explained with the fact that there are more female students than male so the University strives to provide equal chances for both groups of students (AOQ 4).

After the enrollment to the Faculty, students choose three programs from those offered in the Faculty and determine the degree of priority of these programs. As the final step, applicants are interviewed by the Admission Committee of the relevant department, where they are expected to reveal enthusiasm for working in the chosen sphere of medical care.

With regard to the transfer regulations of the University, students from other higher education institutions are accepted if they transfer from an accredited faculty or university, if they do not have a record of dismissal from the previous university for disciplinary reasons and if their cumulative average grade is not less than 3 (out of 5) or 2 (out of 4), or constitutes 75% of the maximum performance. Besides, students transferred from other universities have to complete at least 50% of the program in order to graduate from King Abdul-Aziz University (Annex C).

According to the Self-Evaluation Report, section 1.5.2, the program does not admit students with disabilities. When students receive an injury or develop any disabilities after the admission to the respective programs, they have the opportunity to transfer to another program or faculty of the University according to the applied transfer regulations (AOQ 18). The University offers special parking lots and lifts accessible on all floors for students with disabilities.

2.3 Study conditions and quality assurance

2.3.1 Human resources

The teaching staff of the bachelor's degree program "Physical Therapy" comprises 28 members, of whom 19 are full-time teachers and 9 are part-time adjunct professors. Among the full-time teaching staff, there are 2 professors, 1 associate professor, 7 assistant professors, 3 lecturers, 2 instructors, 4 practitioners (Self-Evaluation Report 2.1). Among part-time instructors, there are 4 professors, 3 associate professors and 2 assistant professors. Of the whole curriculum, 27 courses are taught by full-time teachers, 9 courses are taught by part-time teachers (AOQ 74).

According to the University, the actual need for the teaching staff in the program is 18 instructors (both in female and male sections of the program) (Annex 8, Operation plan). The average amount of workload for the full-time teaching staff is 12 hours per week and for the part-time teaching staff 6 hours a week (AOQ 75).

Given the fact that the current total number of female students is 125 and the number of male students is 66, the ratio between full-time teachers and the two groups of students is the following: 6-7 female students and 4 male students per one teacher.

With regard to the aspect of selection of the teaching staff, it is emphasized that the Department and the University in general have an established system of recruitment for academic positions. According to the University regulations (Annex D), open positions are publicly announced in local and international newspapers. As the main selection criteria, the University names the academic degree, teaching and work experience in the relevant field, amount of publications and reference letters. Furthermore, applicants for an academic position have to pass an interview by the department committee and then by the faculty committee, after which the University Scientific Council takes the final decision (AOQ 19).

Promotion to a higher position is only possible for PhD holders who work at the department as assistant professors. Having worked for at least 4 years at the University, they can be advanced to the position of an associate and a full professor. Promotion criteria include the length of working in the initial position, scientific activity and number of publications. Thus, an assistant professor has to have 4 publications whereas an associate professor is required to complete 6 publications. Applications for promotion are then submitted to the department chairman upon whose approval the application is forwarded to the faculty vice-dean for postgraduate studies, who reviews and then forwards the documents to the University central committee for promotion (AOQ 20).

It is stated that the Faculty offers the teaching members of the institution various seminars and workshops to develop as well as learn new methods and techniques of teaching. There is a Center for Teaching and Learning Development⁴ within the University, which holds periodical workshops on optimization of teaching and education technologies, student assessment methods, creation of better learning environment, and other topics relevant to the professional development of the Faculty and the University in general. The Physical Therapy Department organizes lectures, seminars and workshops in collaboration with Saudi Physical Therapy Association (Self-Evaluation Report 2.1.3). Thus, 20 demonstrators received the University scholarship to do postgraduate studies abroad. For more information on seminars and workshops organized by the Department see AOQ 77.

As for further human resources in the Department, there are 4 physical therapists, 6 assistant physical therapists, 1 Physical Therapy technician and 2 department

⁴ Visit the website: http://ctld.kau.edu.sa/Default.aspx?Site_ID=322&Lng=EN (24.03.2015)

secretaries (AOQ 76). According to the Department description, the optimal number of technicians in the program is 10 (Annex 8).

2.3.2 Facilities

The Department of Physical Therapy has 3 lecture halls, 2 seminar rooms, 4 laboratories and 5 student workstations in the male campus of the University. The same amount of premises [with the exception of 1 seminar room] is provided for female students. The lecture rooms are designed for 90 seats and are equipped with audiovisual and data show technologies and a smart board. Out of two seminar rooms, the first can accommodate up to 105 people and the second is planned for 90 people. The workstations are suitable for clinical training in electrotherapy, hydrotherapy and manual therapy. The equipment of the department laboratories is briefly described in AOQ 78.

Students of the Department can use the resources of the Central Library, the library at King Fahd Center for Medical Research and the library of King Abdul-Aziz University Hospital. The Medical Library of the University has female and male sections. Besides, students have access to the digital library of the University 24 hours a day⁵.

The branch libraries include: male medical center library in the male campus, female medical center library in the female campus and the library of the University Hospital (AOQ 22). Students of the program have access to the Central Library and the branch libraries during the following hours:

Library	General opening hours	Opening hours for female students only
The central Library	- Sunday to Thursday: 7:30 – 22:00 - Saturday: 17:00 – 21:00	- Saturday: 9:00 – 15:00
The branch libraries	- Sunday to Thursday: 7:30 – 21:30	

Table 7: Opening hours of the libraries

The total number of paper books and resources of the central and branch libraries constitutes 14.190. There are 500 books related to the sphere of Physical Therapy. The list of necessary program-related learning material is annually issued based on the requirements of the teaching staff. It is then submitted to the library administration responsible for purchase of library units (Self-Evaluation Report 2.3.2).

⁵ The University digital library: http://library.kau.edu.sa/Default.aspx?Site_ID=212&lng=EN (24.03.2015)

With regard to computer and media equipment, there are 25 computers that serve all staff members of the Department. Internet is available for teachers and students through their university identification number. Furthermore, there are mobile hard disks, CD drives, DVD drives, USB memory sticks and LCDs available in the Department (Self-Evaluation Report 2.3.3).

The main source of financial support for the King Abdul-Aziz University is the Ministry of Higher Education of Saudi Arabia. The Faculty of Applied Medical Sciences is annually granted a certain amount of funds, which is then distributed to its departments and other units. Financial support for research projects is granted by research organizations, such as Deanship of Scientific Research of KAU, King Fahd Research Centre, and King Abdul-Aziz City for Science and Technology (Self-Evaluation Report, 2.3.4).

Together with the Self-Evaluation Report, the University has submitted a Declaration where the Dean of the Faculty of Applied Medical Sciences announces that the King Abdul-Aziz University and the Faculty are committed to provide students with facilities and equipment necessary for education in study programs, including those of “Clinical Nutrition”, “Diagnostic Radiology”, and Physical Therapy” (see Annex A).

2.3.3 Quality assurance

Quality management is maintained at the King Abdul-Aziz University by the University Secretary for Development, which was established in 2004. The main function of the Secretary for Development is to supervise and manage co-working of the following departments and bodies of the University: Academic Assessment Unit (AAU), Total Quality Management Unit (TQM), and Center for University Education Development, Academic Accreditation Unit, Administrative Development Department, and the Strategic Planning Department (Self-Evaluation Report 1.6.1).

The AAU is responsible for design and review of electronic questionnaires, data analyses and their report as well as for the conduct of workshops and research consultations. The TQM Unit is an advisory body that focuses on planning implementation and evaluation of quality assurance and development procedures. The Academic Accreditation Unit develops accreditation policies, reviews academic accreditation mechanisms, and determines the requirements to international accreditation bodies and etc. The Administrative Development Department promotes the application of national and international standards of quality management systems as part of the professional conduct of the University employees. The

Center for University Education Development supports and encourages professional growth of academic instructors and the improvement of teaching methods and modern teaching technologies (for details on the functions of each unit see AOQ 13, pages 4-5).

According to the University, all units and stakeholders are said to participate in the quality assurance system of the institution. Academic instructors are required to prepare course reports at the end of each semester, which include the description of the course delivery, analyses of achieved results, resources and facilities used in the course, evaluation methods and other relevant aspects (see the form for a course reform in AOQ Annex 1, pages 1-8). These reports are submitted to the University Secretary for Development. The Secretary for Development is in the first year of its establishment and is currently in the process of reviewing the reports and studying the procedure of how and to what departments/colleges the obtained results will be made available.

Students are also integrated into the internal quality assurance process of the University. At the end of each semester, they have meetings with the head of their department. Furthermore, they are required to give feedback on the courses they attended by filling in an evaluation survey (see the form of a course evaluation survey in AOQ Annex 1). Course coordinators compare students' evaluation results with the objectives of the course and then formulate their own suggestion on what and how should be improved. Then they discuss and exchange their suggestions as well as experiences during departmental meetings (Self-Evaluation Report 1.6.3).

Practical relevance of the study program "Physical Therapy" is maintained through the involvement of an Advisory Committee which includes employers of program graduates, members of the program teaching staff, male and female students' representatives, male and female graduates' representatives and the members of the Department management (AOQ Annex 4). The function of the Advisory Committee is to facilitate contact between academic and clinical departments of physical therapy, assist in adapting the program competences to the needs of the labor market, increase the effectiveness of the program curriculum, assist in work placement of graduates and provide feedback on the learning outcomes of the program (AOQ 81).

Academic feasibility of students' workload, as well as correlation between the learning objectives of each course and of the internship year with those of the program are assessed and assured through course and internship evaluations and alumni surveys completed by students at different stages of their studies at the

University (see the forms of these surveys in AOQ Annex 1). The Department provided the recent results of students' course evaluations; please refer to the AOQ, Annex 4, in order to see the percentage statistics of their satisfaction with the teaching process in the program courses.

At the moment, the program "Physical Therapy" has 125 female and 66 male students. Judging by the enrollment statistics of the program (Self-Evaluation Report, section 1.6.6) the number of both female and male students is continuously increasing. Another chart of the same section demonstrates that a number of graduates continue their studies abroad, namely in the USA.

In accordance with the Self-Evaluation Report, 1.6.7, the University website contains information about faculties and colleges, as well as admission procedures implemented in the institution. The official website of the Physical Therapy Department⁶ provides information about the study plan, admission and graduation requirements, employment opportunities, contact information about the teaching staff and other aspects. The University issues also handouts and brochures about the news and activities carried out at the department.

As for general academic support and counselling mechanisms, the University established an Academic Advising Unit for this purpose. Students receive guidance from the academic advisor assigned to them at the beginning of each academic year. Besides, each teacher and tutor has specific office hours and they can also be contacted through the website of the University and per e-mail (Self-Evaluation Report, 1.6.8).

The University states that the Ministry of Higher Education provides equal participation of female and male students in all forms of education (Self-Evaluation Report, 1.6.9). The Department of Physical Therapy assures that it provides equal enrollment opportunities and implements identical teaching and examination procedures for both female and male students.

2.4 Institutional context

The King Abdul-Aziz University was founded in 1967 to serve the needs of the western territories of Saudi Arabia. The College of Economics and Management was the first to be established, followed by the College of Arts and Humanities. Currently, the University encompasses 25 faculties and branch faculties offering

⁶ See: http://pt.kau.edu.sa/Default.aspx?Site_ID=142004&lng=EN (24.03.2015)

education for over 52,000 students. More information is available on the website of the University⁷.

The University has one campus divided into two sections: one for male and one for female students. It is assured that each campus is provided with equal and sufficient amount learning and teaching resources, recreation and sport facilities.

With regard to the information on important institutes and research facilities, the University names the King Fahd Medical Research Centre established in 1980. This research center provides laboratories as well as scientific and administrative support for researchers from different faculties of the University. Another important institution of the University is the King Abdul-Aziz University Hospital; its premises serve the purpose of education and training of students from medical study programs.

The Faculty of Applied Medical Sciences was established in 2003. In the year 2005, the first batches of students were admitted to the programs “Clinical Nutrition”, “Diagnostic Radiology” and “Physical Therapy”. The total number of students in all four programs of the Faculty is 722 people. There are 92 students at the Department of Clinical Nutrition, 116 students at the Department of Diagnostic Radiology and 191 students at the Department of Physical Therapy.

As for the current developments carried out in the Faculty of Applied Medical Sciences, the Department of Physical Therapy will be re-established into the Faculty of Medical Rehabilitation in the coming academic year 2015/2016. Furthermore, master’s degree programs will be established in the departments of Medical Technology and Physical Therapy.

⁷ See: http://www.kau.edu.sa/home_english.aspx (24.03.2015)

3 Expert report

3.1 Preliminary remarks

Study programs of King Abdul-Aziz University, Jeddah, 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 website of the AHPGS⁸. 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 criteria are divided as follows:

- 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, availability of adequate equipment and facilities, study conditions, 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 evaluation of the study programs offered at King Abdul-Aziz University, with the subsequent decision on their accreditation by the AHPGS, was carried out according to an agreed structure.

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

As the second step, a part of the nominated expert group carried out an on-site visit at King Abdul-Aziz University, Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi-Arabia, with the

⁸http://ahpgs.de/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/accred_criteria.pdf

focus of clarification of open questions as well as verification of the statements described in the application documents of the University.

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

The last step of the procedure is the decision regarding the accreditation of the study program of King Abdul-Aziz University. The decision is carried out by the Accreditation Commission of AHPGS.

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

Faculty of Applied Medical Sciences:

- a) "Clinical Nutrition" (Bachelor of Science in Clinical Nutrition);
- b) "Diagnostic Radiology" (Bachelor of Science in Diagnostic Radiology);
- c) "Physical Therapy" (Bachelor of Science in Physical Therapy).

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

As representatives of academic and health care institutions:

Dr. Martin Alfrink⁹

General practitioner in Radiotherapy at the Hospital of Coburg, Germany; Medical practitioner responsible for oncological diseases; expert with broad experience in the fields of Radiotherapy and Radiological Medicine

Prof. Dr. Anja Bosy-Westphal

Professor of Applied Nutrition Sciences and Dietetics at the University of Hohenheim, Stuttgart, Germany; expert in the fields of body composition, obesity, regulation of energy balance and metabolic consequences of its dysregulation

Prof. Dr. Christian Grüneberg

Professor of Physiotherapy at the University of Applied Medical Sciences Bochum, Germany; Head of the study program "Physiotherapy"; expert in the fields of therapeutical sciences, evidence-based practice in physiotherapy, motion systems and movement control

Dr. Dirk Häger

Head physician at the Psychosomatic Preventive Clinic, Regenesa, Juist,

⁹ The experts shown in italics have participated in the on-site visit of the University.

Germany; Team physician at the German Red Cross Blood Donation Service, Niedersachsen, Germany; Bologna expert with broad experience in the area of quality assurance in higher education sector

Prof. Dr. Gregor Hohenberg

Professor in the fields of IT, Media and Knowledge Management at Hamm-Lippstadt University of Applied Sciences, Hamm, Germany; expert in medical imaging in Radiological Technology; patent holder in the sphere of multimedia technology

Prof. Dr. Johannes Keogh

Professor of Nursing at Fulda University of Applied Sciences, Fulda, Germany; member of the academic staff responsible for foreign contacts in the study program "Nursing"; expert with a broad experience in theories and methods of nursing, hospital and community nursing, and nursing education

Dr. Martina Plaumann

Research assistant at the Medical School of Hannover, Hannover, Germany; PhD in Public Health at the Medical School of Hannover; expert in the fields of epidemiology, prevention of diseases and care for specific target groups, and teaching of Public Health and Health Promotion

Prof. Dr. Britta Rademacher

Professor in Engineering and Bioprocess Technologies at Hannover University of Applied Sciences and Art, Hannover, Germany; expert in the spheres of food technology, product development and dairy technologies

Dr. Werner Reiche

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

Prof. Dr. Christian Trumpp

Professor of Speech Therapy 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 Speech Therapy

Prof. Dr. Mieke Wasner

Professor of Physiotherapy, Dean of Studies and a qualified member of the teaching staff responsible for the development of studies in Physiotherapy at the SRH University of Applied Sciences, Heidelberg, Germany; expert in the fields of gerontechnology, geriatrics and sport sciences

Prof. Dr. Gertrud Winkler

Professor in the fields of Nutrition and Food Sciences at Albstadt Sigmaringen University of Applied Sciences, Albstadt and Sigmaringen, Germany; expert in the fields of communal catering, behavioral-economical and nutritional-psychological approaches in the promotion of dining assortment ("choice architecture")

As student representatives:**Martha Hofmann**

Student of Medicine at Witten/Herdecke University, Witten, Germany

For the document-based written evaluation of the study program and the on-site visit of the University, the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS nominated the group of experts. In March-April 2015, the relevant documents were forwarded to the experts to review the available information and determine the strengths, weaknesses and open questions regarding the study programs. The experts' statements from the written evaluations served as the basis in the process of preparation for the on-site visit of the University.

After the University representatives had submitted their responses to the open questions by 11 March 2015, the AHPGS processed and inserted these answers into the program summary. The Self-Evaluation Report, its annexes and the summary of the study program were forwarded to the members of the expert group assigned for the on-site visit.

3.2 Basic information about the study program

The main objective of the bachelor study program "Physical Therapy" offered at the Faculty of Applied Medical Sciences is to prepare specialists who can plan and implement proper techniques and procedures of physical therapy and rehabilitation according to the needs and health conditions of patients. The study program requires the obtainment of 137 credit hours (defined in the program summaries as "study units") according to the national credit system applied at Saudi higher education institutions. One credit hour is calculated based on the number of theoretical and practical hours per week.

It is a full-time study program with a regular duration of four years/eight semesters followed by a one-year (12 months) internship. The program curriculum consists of 54 courses, of which 32 (59%) are program specific courses, 12 (22%) are faculty requirements courses taught to all students of the faculty and ten (19%) are university requirements courses taught to all students at the University.

Students' performance is evaluated based on the results of a Grade Point Average (GPA) and the Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA). GPA is calculated by dividing the sum of the credits received in all courses registered during one semester by the total credit hours of the same courses. CGPA is calculated by dividing the total credits received from all courses a student has completed since join-

ing the program by the sum of the credit hours of these courses. According to the University regulations, the passing GPA grade for the courses and for the program in general is 2.00 out of 5.00.

Admission requirements of the program include a general school certificate or an equivalent document as well as the results of the General Aptitude Test (“Qudrat”) and the General Achievement Test (“Tahseely”). The total admission score of an applicant is calculated according to the following percentage distribution: 50% is defined by the school certificate grade, 20% by the score in the general aptitude test and 25% by the score in the achievement test. In order to be admitted to the faculty students have to complete the preparatory year with an average grade not lower than 2.00 out of 4.00.

There are 100 seats annually available in the study program. Admission takes place every winter semester. The department admits both female and male students. Upon completion of studies, students receive the academic title “Bachelor of Science in Physical Therapy”. The first batch of students has been admitted to the program in 2005/2006. Since then, the program has prepared more than 130 physiotherapists. In the academic year 2013/2014, there have been 28 graduates in the program.

3.3 Expert report

The on-site visit took place on 9 and 10 November 2015 according to the previously agreed schedule. Representatives from the central office of the AHPGS accompanied the expert group during the on-site visit.

The expert group met on 8 November for the initial discussion and briefing by the APHGS prior to the on-site visit. They discussed the submitted application documents and the results of the written evaluations, as well as the accreditation-related questions and foreseeable problems. Furthermore, they prepared the plan of the on-site visit at King Abdul-Aziz University and the associated transportation logistics.

In the course of the on-site visit, the experts conducted open discussions with the representatives of the University management, members of the Faculty of Applied Medical Sciences, program directors and teachers, as well as with a group of students currently studying in the evaluated study program. Furthermore, the experts had a chance to examine the facilities and equipment of program laboratories, lecture and seminar halls as well as of the library study areas.

The expert report is structured in compliance with the accreditation criteria approved by the AHPGS. The study program will be discussed in a comprehensive manner below. The documents of the University, the written reviews of the application documents by the experts, the impressions from the on-site visit and the results of the discussions with the university representatives serve as basis for the statements made in the expert report.

3.3.0 Introduction and comprehensive remarks

King Abdul-Aziz University, Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi-Arabia, was established in 1967 to service the needs of the western territories of Saudi Arabia. Currently, there are more than 52,000 students studying at the University. The University encompasses 25 faculties and branch faculties and it has two separate campuses for female and male students. Each campus is provided with all cultural, recreation and sport facilities and a library.

One of the main research institutes of the University is the King Fahd Medical Research Centre, which was established in 1980. It offers its laboratories and also provides scientific and administrative support for researchers from different faculties of the University. The research center cooperates with other universities and health care institutions of the country. King Abdul-Aziz University has its own hospital and it serves the purpose of education and training of students of medical study programs.

King Abdul-Aziz University is considered to be among the first universities providing education to female students. Apart from regular study programs, the University offers online distance learning opportunities with the help of modern teaching technologies.

One of the long-term goals of the University is the development of standards for the evaluation of student performance, implementation of high-quality research programs as well as the optimal investment of the University resources and capacities. Taking these objectives into account, the University considers the accreditation of its study programs by external international experts as an important source of valuable feedback and an effective impetus for the improvement of teaching and study processes.

The study programs assigned for accreditation are offered by the Faculty of Applied Medical Sciences, which was established in 2003. The faculty contains four departments, each offering one study program (Clinical Nutrition, Diagnostic Radiology, Physical Therapy and Medical Laboratory Technology). The first batch of students was admitted to all programs in the year 2005. The current total number

of students is 92 in the Department of Clinical Nutrition, 116 in the Department of Diagnostic Radiology and 191 in the Department of Physical Therapy.

3.3.1 Program aims and learning outcomes

The objective of the study program “Physical Therapy” is to train students to plan and implement proper techniques and procedures of physical therapy and rehabilitation according to the needs and health conditions of patients. Hence, by the end of their studies, students are expected to judge the outcomes of physical therapy interventions based on anatomical and physiological criteria, to determine adequate treatment methods of various disorders, to apply principles of patient safety and protection acquired through laboratory and clinical trainings, to perform a broad literature review on a selected research topic, and to implement a research project based on a methodological approach. They must learn to comply with the standards of hygiene and safety measures throughout their working process.

With regard to cognitive skills, the program aims at developing critical thinking, problem solving in clinical settings and abilities of evidence-based evaluation and treatment. The program claims to pay a lot of attention to the development of communication skills necessary for successful interaction with colleagues and patients. The program aims to cultivate the qualifications of social responsibility in its student.

The description of the program’s qualification objectives and learning outcomes provided in the written documents is clear and consistent with the mission of the University as well as with the needs of the local community. At the moment, there are 394 physical specialists practicing in Saudi Arabia, whereas this number should constitute 1,229 when calculating one therapist per 1,000 inhabitants. Due to the continuous growth of the local population and the increasing demand for health care specialists, the University predicts good employment opportunities for the program graduates.

During the on-site visit, the educational objectives of the study program and the intended learning outcome were described in detail by the head of the Physical Therapy Department. The academic staff of the department clarified that beside the national qualification objectives described in the documentation, the program will focus in the future also on the aspect of health promotion. In addition, the experts pointed out that the learning outcomes of the program should focus on the guidelines of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA).

From the experts’ point of view, the program representatives should extend the scope of intended employment positions and professional objectives according to

the recommendations of the APTA. To be more precise, beside its clear focus on physical therapy within hospitals and clinical contexts, the study program should also offer knowledge and skills in other sub-specializations directly related to physical therapy, e.g. in community health provision and outpatient clinical care.

Furthermore, the experts noticed that some academic competencies seem to be underrepresented in the study program, e.g. research competences. During the discussions, the teaching staff explained that research belongs to the profile of the program and is taken into account in the design of the program curriculum. However, research-related activities and aspects should be described in more detail as well as documented in a more consistent and transparent manner throughout the whole study program. In particular, the department should consider the introduction of “academic skills” (e.g. paper writing, basic research skills) as early as possible in the curriculum.

As for other competences, related to specialization, cognitive skills and social responsibility, they have been thoroughly illustrated in the application documents and also positively mentioned by students during the on-site visit. The Self-Evaluation Report of the study program presents sufficient data to demonstrate the current demand for the program graduates in the labor market as well as the relevance of the program objectives for the region. The needs of the local society and the region were presented in detail during the on-site visit.

The experts recommend the department to clarify the professional responsibilities, the level and the type of employment positions foreseen for bachelor and master graduates of the program. In other words, the department should have a clear view of professional spheres and directions where graduates with either undergraduate or graduate degrees should pursue their career; for instance bachelor graduates are perhaps expected to work directly with patients, whereas master graduates are more likely to be given organizational and managerial functions.

It became obvious that the University implements more innovative concepts than it has been indicated in the application documents. Taking all the suggestions into account, the experts conclude that the University should properly present the modern, innovative and sustainable concept of the study program curriculum as well as the accomplishments of the program teaching staff and students to the outer world.

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

3.3.2 Curriculum design

The study programs of the College of Applied Medical Sciences are structured according to the following three main requirements:

- University requirement courses; they are obligatory for all students enrolled at the University and are taught mainly in the second and third years of study in the program.
- Faculty requirement courses; they are obligatory for students of a certain faculty and specialization and are usually offered in the first foundation year and also at the beginning of the second year of studies.
- Department requirement courses; they are specific for the program and are taught by the teaching staff of the department from the second to the fourth year of studies.

The study program “Physical Therapy” comprises 54 courses, of which 32 (59%) are program specific courses, 12 (22%) are faculty requirements courses and ten (19%) are university requirements courses. Among faculty requirement courses, five are obligatory whereas seven are elective courses. The regular study period in the program is four years/eight semesters followed by one year of clinical internship.

Students start their education at the University with the preparatory year, which comprises basic courses in English, biology, physics, chemistry, computer and communication skills. The following three years of the program focus on specialization courses combined with university and faculty requirement courses.

After the completion of all courses and study requirements, students can begin their clinical internship year (12 months) either at the University Hospital or other health care institutions approved by the University. The internship year consists of four rotations each lasting for three months. Students work for five days a week, eight hours a day. They are guided by senior hospital supervisors and the academic staff of the department, including the internship coordinator and the head of the Physical Therapy Department. The Intern Logbook contains information on the regulations, structure, evaluation methods and requirements of each rotation of the internship year.

The experts came to the conclusion, that the curriculum and the courses of the bachelor program “Physical Therapy” are very well described. The defined courses are ordered in a systematic way, taking into account the requirements of theoretic-

cal and practical education in physical therapy and rehabilitation as well as the needs of the health care system in Saudi Arabia.

During the on-site visit, it became obvious that health promotion and prevention-concepts are embedded and extendedly implemented in everyday education process of the study program. As it has been mentioned earlier, the experts recommend the program administration to describe the learning objectives, their approach towards curriculum design and experiences in the implementation of the curriculum objectives in a clear and more transparent manner.

When analyzing the workload of the program, the experts noticed that it requires the accomplishment of too many courses in relation to the little amount of envisaged working hours. The teaching staff replied to this observation by saying that they are currently in the process of reorganizing the study plan in order to reduce the number of the courses. Their goal is to design bigger education units or modules consisting of several individual courses. This plan corresponds with the experts' view on how to decrease the examination load of the curriculum, which the program students complained about during the on-site visit discussions. On the one hand, such larger units or modules are usually completed with a single content-related examination. On the other hand, combination of seminars, lectures, practical sessions and other classes from different disciplines and aiming at different competences under the umbrella of one module would increase the interdisciplinary capacities and competences of the program content.

As mentioned previously, some academic competences, e. g. research-related skills, should be offer in the program study plan as early as possible in order to involve students into academic writing and scientific discourse starting with the initial years of the higher education process.

It should be distinctly emphasized that the academic staff of the department is currently working on the new curriculum of the study program "Physical Therapy", which is expected to be implemented as of the academic year 2016/2017. Many of the consideration and suggestions articulated by the expert group are going to be put into practice in the modified curriculum. This fact demonstrated in turn the high level of engagement and dedication of the teaching staff to the success of the study program.

The experts are convinced that the study program and the faculty in general could considerably enrich the expertise of their teaching staff and intensify the engagement of students in the academic and social life of the University through the establishment of contacts with other Saudi universities. Such contacts should en-

compass mutual exchange opportunities for learning and teaching at other national higher education institution for a specific amount of time. Due to cultural aspects, it might be a positive option to start with short-term exchange periods, e.g. summer schools lasting for one or several weeks.

The same ideas apply to the experts' advice to initiate international collaborations with foreign higher education institutions. The experts emphasize that the aspect of internationality is one of the crucial constituents of modern societies and higher education. Therefore, they suggest the program administration and the faculty to launch student and teacher exchange projects with universities abroad. The experts believe, for instance, that inviting international scientists to teach for one or several semesters would allow students to receive a better insight, for instance, into methods of physical intervention, incorporation of the results of laboratory and imaging studies for the establishment of impairment diagnosis as well as the practice of mobility promotion in other countries. At the same time, the program teachers could share their own experience in the development of treatment plans and implementation of specific exercises with international peers and students while working as guest professors, lecturers or researchers at universities abroad. The organization of student exchange opportunities for both local and visiting students from other universities will also positively enhance the faculty's role on the international academic stage.

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

3.3.3 Staff

The teaching staff of the Bachelor's degree program "Physical Therapy" comprises 28 members, of whom 19 are full-time teachers and nine are part-time adjunct professors. Among the full-time teaching staff, there are three professors, seven assistant professors, three lecturers, two instructors, four practitioners. Among part-time instructors, there are four professors, three associate professors and two assistant professors. Of the whole curriculum, 27 courses are taught by full-time teachers, nine courses are taught by part-time teachers.

Given the fact that the current total number of female students is 125 and the number of male students is 66, the ratio between full-time teachers and the two groups of students is six to seven female students and four male students per one teacher.

Overall, the teaching and academic staff of the University 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 came to the conclu-

sion that there is a strong corporate identity and positive group dynamics among the University and the faculty administration.

As the main selection criteria, the University names the academic degree, teaching experience in the relevant field, amount of publications and reference letters. Furthermore, applicants for the academic position have to pass an interview by the department committee and then by the faculty committee, after which the University Scientific Council takes the final decision. Promotion to a higher position is possible only for PhD holders who work at the department as assistant professors, having worked for at least four years at the University. Promotion criteria include the length of working in the initial position, scientific activity and number of publications. Thus, an assistant professor has to have four publications whereas an associate professor is required to complete six publications.

The academic staff of the Department of Physical Therapy offers extensive support to its students.

Members of the program teaching staff participate in a number of national and international workshops and conferences, and are active in various academic research projects. This guarantees that they stay up to date with the global developments in the field of physical therapy and integrate an international perspective into the teaching process.

From the experts' point of view, the personnel selection criteria of the University are described in a sufficient and transparent manner. The amount of full-time teaching staff is sufficient for the current number of students. Furthermore, the teaching staff is appropriately qualified and experienced for their particular teaching responsibilities. During the on-site visit discussions, students of the Faculty of Applied Sciences have explicitly pointed out that there are sufficient mentors at the University and that they are content with the support system of the institution.

Based on the application documentation and the observations from the on-site visit at the University, the experts have concluded that the academic staff of the program reveals a great potential and interest to participate in further qualification development activities. Taking this into account, the University has established a learning centre offering additional education opportunities for both teachers and students. In the course of the on-site visit, the experts have ascertained that the University offers financial support not only to students but also to PhD students as well as to other members of the teaching staff for scientific projects.

The experts underline that the academic degrees and competencies of the teaching staff fulfills the scope of necessary theoretical and practical expertise in physi-

cal therapy. At the same time though, as mentioned earlier, some new approaches and development trends in the field of physical therapy appear to be underrepresented among the qualifications and the teaching domains of the academic staff; for instance, the growing attention to health promotion and changes in disease paradigm (e.g. chronic diseases, metabolic syndrome and cognitive impairments) should be embedded into the scientific interest sphere of the teaching staff as well as into the study content of the program students.

In addition, the experts emphasize that the introduction of more opportunities to visit other national as well as international universities, to study or to work as guest lecturers, could enhance the pedagogical and scientific expertise of the program teaching staff. Such projects will enable the teachers to establish contacts with local academic circles as well as with international peers and scientific organizations.

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

3.3.4 Facilities and learning resources

The Department of Physical Therapy has three lecture halls, two seminar rooms, four laboratories and five student workstations in the male campus of the University. The same amount of premises (with the exception of one seminar room) is provided for female students. The lecture rooms are designed for 90 seats and are equipped with audiovisual and data show technologies and a smart board. Out of two seminar rooms, the first can accommodate up to 105 people and the second is planned for 90 people.

Students of the department can use the resources of the central library, the library at King Fahd Center for Medical Research and the library of King Abdul-Aziz University Hospital. The Medical Library of the University has female and male sections. Besides, students have access to the digital library of the University 24 hours a day.

With regard to computer and media equipment, there are 25 computers that serve all staff members of the department. Internet is available for teachers and students through their university identification number. Furthermore, there are mobile hard disks, CD drives, DVD drives, USB memory sticks and LCDs available in the department.

The premises and the equipment available in the study program “Physical Therapy” are described in detail. The experts positively evaluated the concept of virtual

practice applied the study program and recommended its further extensive implementation in the process of studies.

However, in the course of the on-site visit at the University the experts have observed that there is a shortage of diagnostic apparatuses and functional training equipment in the Department of Physical Therapy. Therefore, they strongly recommend the department administration to enhance the technical resources of the program. The experts add that these new facilities should focus, among other things, on the scope of activities patients can perform during medical care. This will provide students with the perspectives of working not only in clinics and hospitals, but also in intermediate care facilities (ICF).

Within the same context, the experts underline the fact that the University is planning to open a new rehabilitation faculty. Hence, they presume that in the course of its construction, the University will take into account also the current and the future needs of the Physical Therapy Department.

To conclude, the program has adequate facilities and equipment as its disposal for the teaching and learning requirements. 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 criterion are met in full.

3.3.5 Study process and student assessment

In order to be admitted to the preparatory year at the University, applicants have to submit a general secondary school certificate or an equivalent and their scores in two standard national tests. In order to be admitted to the faculty, in other words to the second year of the program, students have to complete the preparatory year with an average grade not lower than 2.00 out of 4.00. Furthermore, they have to pass the medical investigation, meaning that students must declare whether they suffer from contagious diseases, diabetic disorders and whether they have any restrictions in physical abilities, which might prevent them from fulfilling the requirements of the study program.

The Department of Physical Therapy has both female and male students. The University asserts its commitment to the provision of equal opportunities for all students. The Special Needs Centre of the University has been established to help students with disabilities and chronic illnesses. The center provides special accommodations and, for example, reading material in Braille for blind students.

Students' Admission to the Faculty of Applied Medical Sciences is determined by three factors: 1) competition based on students' average grade for the preparatory year, 2) enrollment capacity of the faculty, and 3) by the admission standards of the Faculty Board. After the enrollment to the faculty, students choose three programs from those offered in the faculty and determine the degree of priority of these programs. As the final step, applicants are interviewed by the admission committee of the relevant department. The average of 100 places is annually available for the admission of new students.

The expert group evaluates the programs' admission requirements and procedures as very well structured. The University' admission structure consists of two stages: first, admission to the preparatory year and then enrollment to a specific study program. It is efficient and adequate taking into account the large number of applicants each year. The University follows the national guidelines for the admission to higher education institutions established by the Saudi Ministry of Education.

With regard to the criterion of physical fitness as one of the admission requirements in the Faculty of Applied Sciences, the experts are confident that it would be more adequate if specific characteristics of each study program are taken into account. Thus, the enrollment of students with diabetes into the study program "Clinical Nutrition" is certainly reasonable, whereas physical disablement is very likely to produce considerable hindrances in the "Physical Therapy" or "Diagnostic Radiology" study programs. Therefore, the experts recommend the faculty to prepare a program-specific definition of the criterion of physical fitness according to the learning and training content of each study program.

Transfer and recognition of academic credits acquired at other higher education institutions is possible if these students transfer from an accredited and recognized university, do not have a record of dismissal, and can provide the cumulative average grade of 3.00 out of 5.00 or 2.00 out of 4.00. Besides, they have to complete at least 50% of the program in order to graduate from King Abdul-Aziz University.

Coherence and rationality of the study plan, module succession and students workload in different stages of studies are calculated and established on the basis of regulated class contacts, independent study time given for the completion of the set assignments, and the preparation phase for the final exams.

The study program does not maintain any direct cooperation or exchange projects with other national or international higher education institutions. The experts are

confident that mobility of students and teachers, as well as the development and implementation of international exchange opportunities, constitute the indispensable part of modern education. Therefore, as it has already been mentioned, they strongly recommend the department and the faculty to introduce possibilities for student and teacher exchange.

Students' performance is assessed in the study program by means of continuous evaluations carried out during the semester and final examinations carried out at the end of each semester. The percentage ratio of continuous and final assessments varies from 40 to 60%, depending on the course requirements. In addition, students have to pass clinical exams, taken primarily in the fourth year of studies. Re-examinations or reset examinations take place once a year before the first semester of the following academic year. Every student has four attempts to pass any course of the program. The University has regulations and procedures enabling students to issue an appeal with regard to examination results.

From the experts' point of view, the examination system of the University is competence-oriented; it adequately evaluates students' understanding of the learning material as well as their performance in practical classes. Nevertheless, the experts recommend the department representatives to reorganize the examination scope as well as the size of the program courses. In total, the program consists of 54 courses, each completed with a respective examination, which leads to a high level of examination load for students. Taking this into account, the experts suggest the program administration to elaborate upon the combination of courses into larger units like modules that are finished with a single module-related examination. Such larger units or modules could also help to make the program more interdisciplinary and integrative with regard to other branches of medical sciences. As a source of additional information about the design of modules, the experts refer to the document "ECTS User's Guide", which is applied within the European higher education area.

Feasibility of students' workload, examination requirements and training assignments is evaluated and guaranteed by means of course and internship questionnaires for current students and graduates. From the experts' point of view, the University should maintain an attentive overview of graduates' career paths in order to determine insufficiencies as well as development potentials of the study program "Physical Therapy". Through continuous contact with former students, the University could also effectively detect what knowledge and skills they lack at current employment positions and what additional job opportunities are in general available for the program graduates.

The University publishes the results of the questionnaires and surveys thus making them available to all stakeholders involved.

The Academic Advising Unit of the University is responsible for the general academic support and counselling of students. At the beginning of each academic year, students are assigned to a personal academic advisor. In addition, each teacher and tutor has specific office hours and can also be contacted through the website of the University and per e-mail.

The discussion with students has revealed that the teaching staff of the study program gives high priority to the support of students. There is a wide variety of possibilities for students to take part in the development of the study program, the faculty and the University as a whole. For instance, students can work on their own projects, and for that they receive extensive assistance and guidance from the University. On the whole, the experts were impressed by the academic performance of the program students, who have proven to be critical-thinking and achievement-oriented, and who very much identify themselves with their University and the faculty.

Concerning the integration of research into the program, physiotherapy students are required to complete a mandatory course dedicated to a research project, which is then awarded with 2 credits. Upon completion of the course, students have to prepare a report about the work and results they have achieved, and then present it in front of an examining committee.

From the experts' point of view, such a report is comparable with a final paper or a bachelor thesis required in European higher education institutions. The experts advise the University to award more credit hours for research projects and the reports. By doing so, the University would reinforce the importance of independent projects and of individual academic engagement in the program.

At the same time, they recommend the program academic staff to design and include into the program curriculum an introductory course dedicated to basic methods and tools necessary for the implementation and documentation of a scientific work and research project. This course should be offered relatively early, for instance in the second or the third years of studies, in order to encourage the formation of students' competences of scholarly work and writing already in the early stages of the higher education process.

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

3.3.6 Program management

The quality assurance system of the University is based on the concept of “Total Quality Management”. It encompasses a number of units and special departments, whose main function is to guarantee the design and review of written and electronic questionnaires, supervision of evaluation procedures, review of accreditation mechanisms, promotion of national and international standards of quality management, provision of opportunities for professional growth of academic instructors and the improvement of teaching technologies.

At the same time, each academic department of the University implements and participates in various quality assurance procedures. The Department of Physical Therapy guarantees the quality of the study program “Physical Therapy” through the fact that all stakeholders are involved in the internal quality assurance procedures within the department. Hence, students are required to submit evaluation surveys at the end of each course, where they give feedback about the course content, instructors and assessment methods. Course coordinators then compare students’ evaluation results with the objectives of the course and then formulate their own suggestion on what and how should be improved. Academic instructors prepare course reports at the end of each semester, which include the description of the course teaching process, analyses of achieved results, resources and facilities used in the course, evaluation methods and other relevant aspects. These reports are submitted to the University Secretary for Development for further review and analyses.

External independent advisers and prospective employers are involved in the evaluation of the program’s relevance to the professional practice. They review course portfolios, fill in questionnaires, visit program laboratories and clinical training premises, interview students as well as speak to the academic and hospital training staff supervising students. Through these surveys, the University intends to obtain information about professional skills and knowledge required of program graduates upon employment in a health care institution. Thus, the program management continuously controls and ensures the compatibility of the program learning outcomes with the demands of the national labor market.

The experts underline that King Abdul-Aziz University has a very well-structured and comprehensive quality management system, effectively put into use in all teaching and administrative units of the institution.

Regular evaluations of quality are undertaken within each course of the program based on valid evidence, relevant performance indicators, and appropriate benchmarks. The efficiency of stakeholders’ participation in this process is

demonstrated through the fact that their feedback forms the main component of improvement plans subsequently carried out in the department.

The experts recommend the University and the department to provide more concrete and detailed recording of the positions, where graduates of the program have found an employment. As it has already been explained above, this information can serve as an empirically proven basis for the continuous development of the study program. Apart from the existing needs of the program, it will also be possible to distinguish the upcoming ones and, thus, to react to various challenges in the appropriate manner and in due time.

Moreover, the experts recommend the department to evaluate the current workload of students and of the teaching staff, and consequently compare the obtained results with the initially intended amount of working hours. By doing so, the department could calculate the actual load of work in the program and also assume the necessary measures if there are substantial disparities between expectation and reality. In this regard, the experts underline that although the University refers to the average self-study hours, these hours are not considered when calculating the credit hours. This means that students' self-study time is not reflected in the credit system of the University, although it is an important part of education process and it shows, together with the contact hours, the whole scope of students' input in the study program (please find more information in this regard in the document "ECTS User's Guide"). Therefore, the experts recommend the University to consider not only the contact hours but also the self-study hours when awarding the credit hours and when comparing the actual workload with the intended one.

During the on-site visit of the University, the experts had an opportunity to directly discuss various aspects of education with the management of the study program "Physical Therapy". As a result of this direct communication and experience exchange, they came to the conclusion that the quality assurance concept of the program management relies on continuous performance monitoring and comparative evaluations of performance.

Information about the University's institutional structure, vision and objectives, general admission requirements, academic support services, questionnaire fulfillment requirements, alumni inquiry procedures and research paper database is available on the official website of the University. The website contains also information about the mission and vision of the Faculty of Applied Medical Sciences, including its admission requirements and procedures, study process specifications, graduation requirements, departments, academic and administrative units and committees, the list of academic personnel and their contact information,

annual student meetings, latest news and the descriptions of the administrative positions offered at the faculty. The University website provides a thorough description of the Department of Physical Therapy, including its organizational structure, mission and objectives, admission and graduation requirements, learning and training premises, members of the academic staff, available scientific periodicals, list of the necessary reading material, course and examination schedule and other program-related information.

During the on-site visit of the University, students and the members of the teaching staff expressed their general contentment with the system of information publication and distribution on all stages of the education and teaching process.

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

3.4 Summary

First of all it should be emphasized that the on-site visit of King Abdul-Aziz University took place in an exceptionally open atmosphere and in the form of mutual respect and appreciation. The experts received extensive and highly competent answers from the representatives of the University to all of their questions and inquiries. As a result, it became obvious that all members of the University – starting with the University and the faculty administration and including the personnel responsible for the study program “Physical Therapy” and students – show tremendous engagement and commitment to the success of the University and of the individual study programs. In this respect, the discussion round with the group of students must be highlighted in particular. Students have displayed such motivation and open-mindedness, which is quite rare to come across.

In addition to the overarching aspects that were presented in the introduction to the assessment, the accreditation procedure focused on the qualification objectives, the design and the structure of the study program in particular. Aspects related to quality management, as well as the learning resources, facilities and staff have been discussed.

From the experts’ viewpoint, the study program “Physical Therapy” completely fulfils the evaluation criteria described above.

The Bachelor program “Physical Therapy” has an adequate program design that assures the acquisition of knowledge by students over the period of education. The objectives of the study program meet the requirements of the current job market of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The description of the study program, which consists of four years of full-time study followed by one year of clinical training, is

distinct and consistent. The structure and the processes of quality assurance of the program management are described and explained in detail. The study program has a well-functioning teaching and examination system. Learning material, training equipment, digital technologies and other necessary facilities are provided in a sufficient and available manner.

The high quality of the offered courses, the relevance of the study programs to the current needs of the local society, qualified teaching staff and the open-minded attitude of the University towards innovative medical education and equal participation of all students in higher education process make it very attractive for students from all over the country. The location of the University in the city of Jeddah further contributes to its high popularity.

Similar to other higher education institutions in Saudi-Arabia, King Abdul-Aziz University currently has to deal with the continuously growing number of applicants and admission rates. This situation creates challenges for the institution in terms of space and material resources as well as the need for additional teaching forces. Accordingly, the experts support the conclusion, that the decision to establish a master study program in “Physical Therapy” must be based on the possibility of the University to recruit the necessary number of qualified teaching staff.

The experts came 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.

Recommendations for all study programs:

- As an overall recommendation for the development of all three study programs, the Faculty of Applied Medical Sciences should consider the organization of possibilities for students and the faculty members to study or work at partner higher education institutions within Saudi Arabia. Given the cultural aspects, it could be an option to start with short-term exchange periods, e.g. summer schools. For the initiation of internationality, the faculty administration should also contemplate upon the arrangement of visit and specialty-related studies and teaching possibilities for students and members of the teaching staff at foreign higher education institutions.
- The experts recommend the departments' administrations to rethink the examination scope and the size of the programs' courses. They have determined that the programs consist of many courses, each completed with a respective examination, which leads to a high level of examination load for students. In this regard, the experts suggest combining the courses into larger units like

modules that are completed with a single examination. As a source of additional information about the design of modules, the University could refer to the document “ECTS User’s Guide” applied within the European higher education area.

- The experts advise the faculty to award more credit hours for research projects and reports required in the study programs. By doing so, the faculty would reinforce the importance of scholarly work and of individual academic engagement in the education process.
- The faculty should maintain communication with its graduates, and it should also attentively follow their career paths in order to determine insufficiencies and development potentials of each study program.
- From the experts’ point of view, the respective department should continuously evaluate the current workload of students and of the teaching staff, and consequently compare obtained results with the initially intended amount of working hours. Thereby, it is important to take into account not only the contact hours but also students’ self-study hours when calculating the credit hours and when comparing the actual workload with the intended one.
- With regard to the admission requirement of “physical fitness”, the experts strongly recommend the faculty to prepare a program-specific definition of the criterion of physical fitness according to the learning and training content of each study program.

Recommendations for the “Physical Therapy” program

- The experts emphasize that research-related competences and learning activities of the program courses should be described in more detail and also documented in a more consistent and transparent manner throughout the whole study program. In particular, the department should consider the introduction of “academic skills” (e.g. paper writing, basic research skills) as early as possible in the curriculum.
- From the experts’ point of view, the program representatives should extend the scope of intended employment positions and professional objectives, for example according to the guidelines of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA). To be more precise, beside its clear focus on physical therapy within hospitals and clinical contexts, the study program should also offer knowledge and skills in other sub-specializations directly related to physical therapy, e.g. in community health provision and outpatient clinical care.
- The experts recommend the department to clarify the professional responsibilities, the level and the type of employment positions foreseen for bachelor and master graduates of the program. In other words, the department should have

a clear view of professional spheres and directions where graduates with either undergraduate or graduate degrees should pursue their career.

- It became obvious that the Department of Physical Therapy implements more innovative concepts than it has indicated in the application documents. Therefore, the experts believe that the department should develop a more modern and innovative image of the study program.
- The experts recommend the academic staff of the program to promote new approaches and developments in physical therapy (e.g. health promotion and changes in disease paradigm) among teachers as well as students of the program.
- The experts strongly recommend the department administration to enhance the diagnostic apparatuses and functional training equipment of the program. New facilities should focus, among other things, on the scope of activities patients can perform during medical care. This will provide students with the perspectives of working not only in clinics and hospitals, but also in intermediate care facilities (ICF).
- Finally, the experts recommend the academic staff of the program to design and include into the program curriculum an introductory course dedicated to basic methods and tools necessary for the implementation and documentation of a scientific work and research project. This course should be offered relatively early in order to encourage the formation of students' competences of scholarly work and writing already in the initial years of the higher education process.

4 Decision of the accreditation commission

The decision of the Accreditation Commission of 18 February 2016

The resolution of the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS of 18 February 2016 is based on the University's application documents, the experts' review and the results of the on-site visit described in the expert report. Moreover, the Accreditation Commission took into account the response opinion of the University regarding the study program.

The on-site visit of the University took place on 9 and 10 November 2015 according to the previously agreed schedule.

The accreditation decision is based on the accreditation criteria of the AHPGS. They have been developed in close accordance with the existing standards 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 considers that all accreditation criteria are fulfilled and adopts the following decision:

The bachelor study program "Physical Therapy" completed with the academic degree "Bachelor of Science in Physical Therapy" is accredited. The regulated study period in the program is four years/eight semesters followed by a one-year internship. The study program comprises 54 courses, of which 32 are program-specific courses, 12 are faculty requirement courses taught to all students of the faculty and ten are university requirement courses taught to all students of the University.

The study program "Physical Therapy" is accredited for the duration of five years until 30 September 2021.

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 recommendations outlined in the expert report.