

Akkreditierungsagentur für Studiengänge
im Bereich Gesundheit und Soziales
Accreditation Agency for Study Programs
in the Area of Health and Social Science



Assessment Report

**for the Application of
Beirut Arab University, Lebanon,
Faculty of Health Sciences,
Nutrition and Dietetics Department
for the Accreditation of the Study Program
Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) in "Nutrition and Dietetics"**

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Decision	July 25, 2017

¹ The experts shown in italics have not participated in the on-site visit of the University.

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1 Introduction

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

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

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

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

The external assessment procedure is carried out in four steps:

² Approved by the AHPGS Accreditation Commission

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 for the expert group, together with all other documentation.

II. Written review

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 applied accreditation criteria. Consequently, the written reviews of the experts are comprised together.

III. On-site visit (peer-review)

The experts carry out the on-site visit at the University. In the course of the on-site visit, the expert group holds discussions with various members of the University, including the University and college administrative representatives, the program management, teaching staff and a group of students. Such extensive discussions provide the expert group with additional information and a better insight into the structure and content of the program.

The task of the experts during the on-site visit is to verify the rationality of the program's objectives and learning outcomes and their correspondence to the needs of the current and expected labor market situation, to evaluate the sufficiency and effectiveness of the teaching staff, material resources, and methods of assessment (admission requirements, assessment of achievements, students' support), as well as of the program management (program administration, internal and external assurance of study quality).

Following the on-site visit, the expert group issues the expert report for the study program. This is based on the results of the on-site visit, the documents submitted by the University and the experts' considerations based on these documents. The expert reports are made available to the University to issue a response opinion.

The expert report, as well as the University's response opinion – together with the application documents – is submitted to the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS for the final decision.

IV. The AHPGS accreditation decision

The Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS examines the documentation made available, namely the University's application documents, the summary comprised by the AHPGS, the Expert Report and the University's response opinion. These documents represent the basis for the decision of the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS, which can be formulated in three ways: accreditation, accreditation with conditions or denial of accreditation.

2 Overview

2.1 Procedure-related documents

Beirut Arab University (hereinafter “the University”) assigned the AHPGS to carry out the accreditation of the bachelor study program “Nutrition and Dietetics”.

The University submitted the Self-Evaluation Report (hereinafter referred to as SER) and the relevant annexes of the bachelor study program “Medical Laboratory Technology” to the AHPGS in electronic form on December 9, 2016. The contract for the assessment and the accreditation of the study program (without the awarding of the official seal of the Accreditation Council of the Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programs in Germany) was signed by the University and the AHPGS on September 11, 2015.

On February 16, 2017, the AHPGS forwarded the open questions (OQ) pertaining to the application documents of the study program to the University. On March 6, 2017, the University submitted the answers to the open questions (AOQ) and explanatory notes to the AHPGS in electronic form.

This document presents the summary of the study program “Nutrition and Dietetics” prepared by the AHPGS.

The Self-Evaluation Report submitted by the University follows the outline recommended by the AHPGS. Along with the Self-Evaluation Report, the University provided the following documents:

Annex	Description
1	Module Descriptions
2	Nutrition and Dietetics Hospital Agreement
3	Benchmarks of Nutrition
4	Status Report Nutrition
5	Dietetics Internship Manual
6	Legislation of Dietetic Practice
7	Grade Distribution
8	Institutional Agreement
9	CVs Core Professors
10	CVs Adjunct Professors
11	CVs Instructors

12	Al Mounla Agreement
13	Al Raii Agreement
14	Dallaa Agreement
15	Dar Al Shifaa Agreement
16	Hammoud Agreement
17	Makassed Agreement
18	Tripoli Govern Agreement

Alongside the study-program-specific documents, the following documents pertain to “Medical Laboratory Technologies,” “Nursing” and “Nutrition and Dietetics,” which are all study programs submitted for external evaluation:

Annex	Description
A	Rules and Regulations
B	BAU Student Manual
C	BAU Strategy 2013-2018
D	Research Policy
E	BAU Code of Ethics
F	BAU Policies and Bylaws
G	Academic Advising for the Undergraduate Programs
H	BAU Guidelines for Effective Student Assessment
I	Institutional Review Board
J	Faculty of Health Sciences Status Report Volume I 2015-2016
K	Faculty Hiring
L	University Centers Offices and Departments
M	Consultancy Agreement
N	BAU Grading Policy
O	Quality Assurance Center

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

2.2 Study program

2.2.1 Structural data

University	Beirut Arab University
Faculty/Department	Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS), Department of Nutrition and Dietetics
Cooperation partner	Al Makassed General Hospital - Beirut; Al Hayek Hospital - Beirut; Al Hayat Hospital - Beirut; Ain Wazein Hospital - Mount Lebanon; Dallaa Hospital - Sidon; Hammoud Hospital - Sidon; Al Raii Hospital - Ghazieh; Labib Hospital - Sidon; Al Mounla Hospital - Tripoli; Dar Al Shifaa Hospital - Tripoli; Tripoli Governmental hospital - Tripoli
Title of the study program	"Nutrition and Dietetics"
Degree awarded	Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.)
Form of studies	Full-time
Organizational structure	Monday to Friday
Location(s)	Beirut (starting in 2008) and Tripoli (starting in 2010)
Semester structure	Fall: begins in September Spring: begins in February Duration: 15 weeks + two examination weeks Summer: begins in June Duration: 8 weeks
Period of education	Six semesters
Credit Points (CP) according to the Credit Hour System (CHS)	101 Credit Hours
Hours/CP	1 lecture contact hour = 1 credit 2/3 hours of tutorial, practical or clinical classes = 1 credit (Every credit requires 2 hours of self-study.)

Workload	Total: 2,955 hours Contact hours: 1,215 hours Individual work: 1,080 hours Practice: 660 hours
Launch date of the study program	Academic Year 2008/2009
Time of admission	Each winter semester
Number of available places on the program	50 students per year
Number of enrolled students by now	321
Number of graduates by now	182
Number of dropouts by now	58, including 9 who were dismissed for low GPAs (AOQ 29)
Language of studies	English
Particular enrollment conditions	Entrance exam (held twice annually)
Tuition fees	The average fees per semester are around \$3,500. Tuition fees are charged per Credit Hour (SER 1.1.11).

Table 1: Structural data of the study program

2.2.2 Qualification objectives and employment opportunities

The University provided a list of intended learning outcomes of the bachelor study program “Nutrition and Dietetics” according to the following categories: knowledge and understanding, intellectual skills, professional and practical skills, general and transferable skills (SER 1.3.3 and Annex 4: pp.3-6).

The main objective of the study program “Nutrition and Dietetics” is to graduate entry level dietitians with qualifications in accordance with international standards of dietetic practice. In addition, they will be provided with an essential knowledge base in food, food sciences and food systems (SER 1.3.1; Annex 4: Chapter I). The field of dietetics relates the science of food and nutrition to the maintenance or improvement of human health. The study program is supposed to provide students with fundamental knowledge and skills about the role of proper nutrition in regard to human health, the scientific

principles of diet planning and nutritional care of health-related nutrition diseases, as well as the importance of proper nutrition in order to prevent and eradicate malnutrition problems, knowledge about applying community nutrition programs and training in the field of nutrition, clinical nutrition and community, specifically within the context of the Nutrition care process.

Besides acquiring knowledge of nutrition and clinical dietetics, the students are supposed to be able to function in multi-disciplinary teams, to understand professional and ethical responsibility, to communicate effectively with colleagues, patients and other health professionals and to recognize the need for and to engage in life-long-learning (Annex 4). In terms of cognitive skills, the University assures that students will gain practice in critical thinking, decision making and problem solving (SER 1.3.2).

By the end of their studies, graduates should be able to implement evidence based dietary advice within the context of the nutrition care model, be able to function within food service systems through the implementation of food safety and procurement standards. Students should have acquired skills in real life situations such as food service management, community nutrition or medical nutrition therapy (SER 1.3.2). The graduates will be able to target all sectors of the population in different clinical settings, food service and procurement settings, community settings and humanitarian assistance situations. They should be able to further contribute to the advancement of nutritional sciences through participation in research activities (SER 1.3.2).

With regard to the aspect of social responsibility, the program is expected to educate individuals who are aware of the duties and responsibilities towards the patient as well as other members of the healthcare team (SER 1.3.2). The program seeks to enhance both academic and human development of the students and, thus, aims to create various individual characteristics such as independence, trustworthiness and imagination, and to foster self-learning in order to grow morally, ethically, cognitively and behaviorally (SER 1.3.2).

Graduates of the program “Nutrition and Dietetics” are expected to find employment in the community, in clinical surroundings as well as in the food management. Further potential career opportunities for graduates include private hospitals and clinics, food industry, research laboratories, biotechnology firms, schools, governmental bodies and agencies, and pharmaceutical companies (SER 1.4.1; Annex 4: Chapter I).

The Department of Nutrition and Dietetics' graduates are required by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education to pass an official colloquium exam, after which they become certified by the Ministry of Public Health. The exam is directed at graduates of private universities so that they can be eligible for licensing for dietetic practice in Lebanon. This exam is done after the graduates complete a supervised six-month nutrition training program at a hospital.

The University states that data regarding the market status for dietitians is currently unavailable. In 2010, the Lebanese government issued 2,585 licenses for the opening of new health facilities; this number is estimated to increase, as is the need for interdisciplinarily competent medical health professionals. In addition, due to the humanitarian crisis in Lebanon, the professional need for dietitians is expected to grow. The Department is planning to conduct a comprehensive survey to include all graduates and obtain feedback from employers (SER 1.4.2).

Students may choose to pursue further studies. Of the 162 program graduates, 19 are pursuing or have completed a Master's degree in various areas including healthcare, public health, biochemistry, nutrition, food science and technology, etc. at BAU or other universities. A recent screening of 35 alumni revealed that 54% thereof work as clinical dietitians in hospitals or in private clinics.

2.2.3 Modularization and exam system

According to the regulations of the University, an academic year consists of a fall semester and a spring semester that last for 15 weeks each, starting in September and February and ending with a two-week exam period. The summer term spans over a period of eight weeks, including the final examination week. The courses offered for the Nutrition and Dietetics program are one semester in length each. The study program stretches over three years (six semesters).

The University applies a system in which one credit hour is used as a standard to measure and specify the workload of students per semester. One credit hour is equal to one contact hour of lectures plus two or three hours of tutorial, practical and/or clinical classes per week (Annex A).

Every Faculty defines the minimum number of credits required for its students' graduation. These credits consist of **Faculty** and **Departmental Mandatory**

Courses that must be completed by all students in the program as part of the graduation requirements, as well **Major Elective Courses**, from which students can select in order to fulfill the number of elective credits required in the program.

In addition, there is a set of courses designated by the University to ensure that all students acquire broader knowledge. These courses include **University Mandatory Courses** and **University Elective Courses**.

The Bachelor study program “Nutrition and Dietetics” consists of 40-46 courses and 101 credits to be covered in three academic years:

- Mandatory Core Courses (MC) 79 CP
 - Basic Science courses (BS), 21 CP
 - Nutrition Core courses (NC), 58 CP
- Major Elective Courses (ME), 6 CP
- General University Requirements (UR), 16 CP
 - University Mandatory Courses (UM), 7 CP
 - University Elective Courses (UE), 9 CP

The students register for a minimum of twelve and a maximum of 18 credit hours in one semester. All modules have to be completed within one semester or one summer term. The first and second academic year award 34 credit hours, and the last year 33 credit hours (SER 1.2.1).

The list of courses offered, according to the academic program sheet, is as follows (Annex 4: 14-19):

Semester	Course Number	Course Title	CP
Year 1 Fall Semester (1 st)	CHEM 213	General Chemistry	3
	BIOL 223	Basic Biology	3
	HESC 201	Human Anatomy and Physiology	3
	CHEM 215	Organic Chemistry	3
	COMM 201	Epidemiology and Biostatistics	3
	ENGL 001	English	2
	BLAW 001	Human Rights	1
	Semester Total		
Year 1 Spring semester (2 nd)	BCHM 215	Biochemistry	3
	BIOL 226	Microbiology	3
	HESC 202	Healthcare Profession & Bioethics	1
	NUTR 212	Basic Nutrition	3
	ARAB 001	Arabic Language	2
	--	Elective (UE)	4
	Semester Total		
Year 2 Fall semester (3 rd)	NUTR 309	Food Technology	3
	NUTR 313	Food Chemistry	3
	NUTR 315	Human Nutrition & Metabolism	3
	NUTR 317	Malnutrition & Nutrition Interventions	3
	NUTR 319	Meal & Diet Planning	3
	MCOM 003	Communication Skills	2
	Semester Total		
Year 3 Spring semester (4 th)	NUTR 310	Nutrition in Life Span	3
	NUTR 318	Nutrition Education	2
	NUTR 320	Therapeutic Nutrition I	3
	NUTR 322	Assessment of Nutritional Status	3
	HESC 302	Research and Evidence Based Practice	2
	--	Elective (UE)	4
	Semester Total		

Year 4 Fall semester (5 th)	HESC 301	Psychosocial Aspects of Health And Disease	2
	NUTR 409	Therapeutic Nutrition II	3
	NUTR 417	Food Service Management	3
	NUTR 413	Food Safety and Hygiene	3
	NUTR 415	Nutrition and Non-Communicable Diseases	2
	NUTR 411	Sports and Nutrition	3
	--	Elective (UE)	1
	Semester Total		
Year 4 Spring Semester (6 th)	NUTR 402	Community Nutrition	3
	NUTR 408	Special Topics In Nutrition	2
	NUTR 410	Therapeutic Nutrition Practicum	2
	NUTR 406	Research Project	2
	IPEH 512	Interprofessional Education For Health Care	1
	--	Elective (ME)	6
	Semester Total		
Study Program Total			101

Table 2: Study Plan

Please refer to the module descriptions (Annex 1) for detailed information on the modules, including the level, the amount of assigned credits, language of instruction, pursued learning outcomes and skills, content of studies and examinations foreseen in every course of the program.

General University Requirement courses (UR) account for 16 credit hours and can be studied with students from other faculties. They comprise the University Mandatory Courses (UM) (7 CP), including Arabic (ARAB 001), English (ENGL 001), Human Rights (BLAW 001) and Communication Skills (MCOM 003), and University Elective Courses (UE) (9 CP). Basic science courses, such as Basic Biology (BIOL223), General Chemistry (CHEM213), Biochemistry (BCHM215), Human Anatomy and Physiology (HESC201), Microbiology (BIOL226), Organic Chemistry (CHEM215) and Epidemiology and Biostatistics (COMM201) can be studied with students from other majors at the Faculty of

Health Sciences. Also, the modules (IPEH 512) “Interprofessional Education for Healthcare” and “Healthcare Profession and Bioethics” (HESC202) are interdisciplinary courses (Annex 1).

The specifications of these courses are designed and appraised by the Faculty members and the quality assurance member of the Nutrition and Dietetics Department in collaboration with the course instructors in order to assure specific outcomes (SER 1.2.2).

The basic science courses are intended to equip students with the required knowledge to prepare them for the core courses during the more advanced levels of their studies.

The first-year courses prepare the students with a science base required to comprehend the principles of Nutrition and Dietetics. Throughout the second year, nutrition and dietetic specific courses are implemented. Lastly, the third year focuses more on the professionalism and practical applications of the gained knowledge (SER 1.3.4). Core nutrition courses range from the basic nutrition to the analysis and design of diets. The core nutrition courses include basic human nutrition, nutrition through life cycle starting from infancy, childhood, adolescence, adult life and ending with elderhood. It covers the special physiological status during pregnancy and lactation. In addition, dietetics courses cover the nutritional management of diseases, especially chronic ones. Nutrition courses related to community, such as assessment of nutrition status, malnutrition problems, food habits, community nutrition, nutrition and non-communicable diseases and nutrition intervention programs are also included. A research project is undertaken in order to practice community based surveys and assessments. Moreover, nutrition courses include food production aspects, such as courses in food safety & hygiene, food technology, and food service management. (Annex 4: Chapters 2-3).

In the course of their studies, students complete practice hours embedded into Basic and Nutrition Core courses, adding up to a total of 660 hours in laboratories and clinical trainings (Annex 4: p. 27).

The “Dietetic Internship Manual” (Annex 5) describes the mission, goals and schedule of the clinical and food service rotations as well as the expected learning outcomes of each rotation. The learning outcomes include four broad

categories: skills in clinical nutrition, community nutrition and food service management in addition to professional and communication skills.

Additionally, graduates have to complete a six-month clinical rotation upon graduation. The Lebanese government has issued a respective legislation of dietetic practice in 2004 (Annex 6). This legislation states that entry level dietitians must fulfill two main criteria to be eligible for licensing. First, entry-level dietitians must have completed at least 90 credit hours of undergraduate education in dietetics or an equivalent of three academic years at a university recognized by the Lebanese government. Second, the undergraduate dietetic education must be coupled with a six-month period of supervised practical experience in an accredited hospital. Moreover, the legislation recommends that the practical experience must be supervised by the University where the candidate has pursued his/her academic education.

The University provides a "Dietetic Internship Manual" (Annex 5) that describes the mission, goals and schedule of the clinical, community and food service rotations as well as the expected learning outcomes of each rotation. The learning outcomes include four broad categories: skills in clinical nutrition and food service management in addition to professional and communication skills. Even though it is not integrated into the program, it is conducted under supervision of the academic institution as specified in the "Legislation of Dietetic Practice" (Annex 6) in Lebanon. At the end of each rotation the trainee will present a case study he/she chooses from the unit.

The practical experience is scheduled into two main content areas: Clinical Nutrition (16 weeks) and Food Service Management (six weeks). Dietetic interns will spend 16 weeks of supervised practice in Clinical Nutrition, two of which are directed to community nutrition services and the remaining six of which focus on food service management at the selected training site. During the training period, the dietetic interns work under close supervision of a clinical dietitian. According to the "Dietetic Internship Manual" (Annex 5), students have to complete the final clinical rotation in the fields of nutrition care process, internal medicine, oncology, obstetrics and gynecology, coronary care unit, intensive care unit, pediatrics, surgery, food service and community (Annex 5: p.7).

During the six weeks of food service rotation, the dietetic interns have the opportunity to apply principles of food production, procurement, safety, meal

service and financial and staff management and administration. At this level the interns will deal with the reception, preparation and storage of material and prepared food, as well as application of HACCP (“Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points”) principles.

After the completion of the six-month internship, graduates will receive a certificate from the hospital which entitles them to apply for the colloquium exam through the Lebanese Ministry of Health.

Concerning the teaching methods used for the study program, the Department of Nursing and Dietetics applies several teaching methods, including traditional lecturing, class discussions, laboratory-interactive groups, case studies, research projects, research reports, assignments, assigned self-study reports, class illustrations and fieldtrips. In addition, students gain more hands-on experience through hypothetical case studies during the third year in addition to practical laboratory sessions (SER 1.2.4).

There are no e-learning or distance learning services at the Department. The language center at BAU provides an online intensive English course (INTEA 104) through the Auralog program (SER 1.2.5).

In addition, the student information system (Banner) through which student-related operations and processes (such as acceptance, registration processes, fees, grades and transcripts) are performed is made use of at the department of Nutrition and Dietetics (SER 1.2.5).

A specification of semesters to go abroad or to other universities is not given.

The University states that it has established the study program according to international and national benchmarks (Annex 3). In addition, regarding the internationality of the study program, all Faculty and Department courses are taught in English. Moreover, throughout the first semester, students are expected to take the module English (ENGL 001) in order to bring their English competences to the same standards (SER 1.2.2).

Students are expected to be able to pursue further studies outside of Lebanon. Thus, the University states that it has enhanced the curriculum based on suitable benchmarking with nationally and internationally accredited curricula (SER 1.2.8, Annex 10). The University also claims to be involved in many international projects, mainly with European Union institutions within the

frameworks of TEMPUS and ERASMUS MUNDUS projects. In the past, BAU has participated in “Egypt-Lebanon-EU Mobility Exchange Network” (ELEMENT), 2011- 2015; “Program for Excellence Academy Cooperation Exchange” (PEACE), 2012-2016; and “Program for Excellence Academy Cooperation Exchange” (PEACEII), 2012-2016. In addition, BAU has signed an inter-institutional agreement through Erasmus+ starting in 2017 with the Pavia University in Italy (SER 1.2.9; Annex 9).

In its current strategy (Annex C), BAU encourages such projects and is working to encourage international student mobility, to support the exchange of international staff, and to facilitate the procedures for credit transfer.

In its Answers to our Open Questions, the University stated that no undergraduate Nutrition students have yet chosen to study abroad, but that the Department still encourages students to do so in their summer breaks to avoid interruptions or delays in their study plan.

Furthermore, the University states that it approaches student mobility through the provision of international conferences, two of which have been attended by groups of Nutrition & Dialectics students.

According to the University, mainly three courses within the Nutrition and Dietetics Program contribute to the integration of research activities of the students: “Research and Evidence Based Practice” (HESC 302) in the fourth, “Nutrition And Non-Communicable Diseases” (NUTR 415) in the fifth, and “Research Project” (NUTR 406) in the sixth semester (SER 1.2.7). Firstly, students are introduced to principles of research designs and methodologies and prepare a small research proposal on a research topic of their own choice. NUTR 415 teaches students how to find relevant, recent scientific evidence related to dietary guidelines or clinical applications. During the “Research Project” (NUTR 406), students have the opportunity to partake in hands-on research activities (data collection, data entry, analysis, reporting). For more details on the integration of research at the University, please refer to BAU’s “Research Policy” (Annex D). The research project is completed with a report; a final thesis is not envisaged in the study program.

According to the University, the exam system is based on a continuous assessment, in order to assess and measure students’ achievements throughout the whole semester. The different assessment methods are based on written exams, quizzes, practical exams, reports, seminars, presentations and class-

room discussions, and mock colloquiums. The University states that students are informed at the beginning of each course about the type and the timing of each assessment and their weighting through the course specification and layout. For more information on student assessment please refer to "BAU Guidelines for student assessment" (Annex H) and "BAU's "Rules and Regulations" (Annex A).

According to University regulations, course instructors are asked to present at least two written exams during and one final examination at the end of the semester. Should a course include laboratory session, at least one practical exam is required in addition to the written examinations. All assessments carried out during the semester count towards 60% of the grade while the final exam in the 16th week of the semester counts 40%.

The University states that, for all types of assessments except final exams, students who are unable to take exams for legitimate reasons are allowed to apply for reexamination. The course instructor recommends positively or otherwise to Department's council for approval of reexamination. This is only feasible if they have attended and completed at least 80% of the course requirements and have been granted the approval of the course instructor. The unfinished course requirements must be met by the end of the first week of the following semester. Otherwise, a failing grade of "F" will appear for that course on the student's transcript. For more information, please refer to "Rules and Regulations" (Annex A). Students may repeat passed courses once to obtain a better grade (Annex B: VII.14); students may also repeat failed courses as many times as required before attaining a grade of 60% or better, as long as they are not subject to dismissal for other reasons (AoF A1).

The evaluation and grading system of the University is described in the "Rules and Regulations for Undergraduate Programs" (Annex A). The University differentiates between the Course Grade Point Average (GPA), the Semester Grade Point Average (SGPA) and the Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) for the whole period of studies (Annex A, V). The student performance is assessed based on a letter grade (A-F) and grade point average system (4.00-1.00). All assessments add up to a total of 100 marks and the students' score is translated into a grade point average (GPA) and a letter grade. Please refer to annex B: VII.13. The minimum passing grade for Faculty and University

requirement courses is "D". In case of having a "D-", the student will have to repeat the course.

The University assures us that it has a non-discriminatory policy with regard to disability. Individual cases are forwarded to the department, and the department council makes recommendations in their regard to the faculty council based on the degree of disability and the program requirements (SER 1.2.3).

Transfer terms and regulations are listed in Annex B (Student Manual), section 9, IX. Based on recommendations of the Department and the Faculty Councils, in coordination with the Student Affairs Department, and upon the University Council's approval, students are exempted from any courses previously taken at another university or faculty. For this, the following conditions must apply:

- the transferred courses are comparable in scientific content and in the number of credits,
- the student has passed the courses with a grade not less than C or its equivalent,
- the course was completed not more than five years ago, and
- the total transferred credit hours do not exceed 50% of the total number of credit hours required to obtain the relevant major degree.

2.2.4 Admission requirements

Admission policies and procedures along with the requirements are listed in the "Rules and Regulations for the Undergraduate Programs" (Annex A). In order to be accepted to the study program, students must complete the admission process for BAU and the program's requirements (Annex A: admission requirements):

- Hold the official Lebanese Secondary School Certificate or its official equivalent issued by the Lebanese Ministry of Education & Higher Education.
- Pass an entrance exam as well as an interview.
- Pass the BAU English Language entrance exam with a grade not less than 60%, TOEFL Exam with a minimum score of 500, IELTS Exam with a minimum score of 5 or the SAT I writing with a minimum score of 380. Should

the English exam not be passed, the student will have to enroll for an intensive English course provided by the University.

- Go through a physical assessment, laboratory tests, and entrance interview.

The Nutrition and Dietetics program admission requirements demand students joining the program to be physically healthy because of the nature of practice and responsibilities of the dietitian towards the patients. This requirement is fulfilled through the physical assessment, laboratory results, and an entrance interview. The University points out that chronic illness is not among the exclusion criteria and students can be accepted in the program on a condition that their illness or its symptoms would not place them or their patients at any kind of physical or psychological danger (SER 1.2.3). The University states that decisions regarding such cases are taken on the merit of individual case by the department (SER 1.5.2).

2.3 Study conditions and quality assurance

2.3.1 Human resources

The University states that a total of 9 faculty members are needed to complete the instruction of the program (SER 2.1.1).

The University assures that a total of four full-time assistant professors and one visiting professor are responsible for professorial teaching in the study program. The expected teaching load for the core academic faculty amounts to approximately 15-24 contact hours per week. Part time faculty teaching hours will be based on the type of agreement with the university (SER 2.1.1). Further policies on duties and responsibilities of the Faculty number according to the rank and position are specified in the "BAU policies and bylaws" (Annex F: Chapter III) and in the "CVs" (Annex 9, 10 and 11). In addition, there are a total of eight adjunct professors. For detailed information on the teaching staff please consult the "Status Report: Volume II" (Annex 4).

In calculating the ratio of student to full time academic based on full-time instructors plus adjunct professors is 11:1 (SER 2.1.1).

In regard to further human resources the department counts with an internship coordinator, who establishes communication with hospitals and ensures secure internship opportunities for graduates. Also, a course coordinator who is

chosen from the full-time academic staff is assigned to one or several courses of the study program to ensure development of syllabi and course content that are consistent with the program learning outcomes and fulfill knowledge and skill requirements for entry-level dietitians (SER 2.2.1) .

The University has regulations for hiring and retention of the teaching staff (Annex K). Depending on the needs of the academic program, the head of the department submits a justified request to hire a faculty member in a definite specialty and research background. The request has to be approved by the University council. BAU continuously monitors the performance of both academic and non-academic staff to ensure that their qualifications and capabilities fit the positions' requirements (see Annex F, chapter III.).

The University assures to focus on the academic staff development to enhance the capabilities of its staff by providing them, whenever possible, with professional-development workshops and training courses that are usually organized by the Deanship of Academic Development and Quality (SER 2.1.3; annex D). According to the University, BAU also encourages the participation of academic and non-academic staff in Tempus and Erasmus Mundus programs to expose them to new practices that can enhance their skills, performance and attributes. All faculty members are also encouraged to attend national and international conferences, symposia and workshops – and are provided with financial support for transportation, registration fees and living allowance for the duration of the event – as well as to publish their scientific research works in top-ranked journals (SER 2.1.3; Annex D: Goals).

2.3.2 Facilities

The Department of Nutrition and Dietetics is part of the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS), located in the fifth floor of the Hariri building, and shares the area with the Medical Laboratory Department. The FHS is situated on the fifth and sixth floors, with a total of six classrooms, teaching offices, dean's office, registrar's office, student affairs office, faculty members' offices, Biomedical laboratories, a Nutrition and Dietetics Laboratory and outpatient clinic, a Nursing Simulation Laboratory, a physical therapy outpatient clinic, a quality assurance room and a Medical Sciences Library. The Hariri building (on the Beirut campus) also hosts two other medical sector facilities, Medicine and Pharmacy.

The classrooms and lecture theaters are all equipped with projectors, PCs and sound systems, which provide a dynamic and interactive environment for utilization of various multimedia forms. In addition, the University has a secure academic website, which provides students, Faculty and administrative staff with an intranet and internet services. The website also provides a portal to access databases and the library web page (SER 1.2.5).

For carrying out the practical training during the study program, the Faculty of Health Sciences provides five laboratories for the study program: Laboratory of basic biology, Laboratory of Biochemistry, Laboratory of General Chemistry, Organic Chemistry Lab, Biomedical Laboratory A&B and Nutrition Laboratory. The detailed equipment of the laboratories is listed in the department's status report (Annex 4: chapter VI). In addition, facilities at the Debbieh campus can also be used, and are listed in the "Status Report" (Annex 4, p.223).

In January 2013, a nutrition clinic ("Nutritional and Weight Management Clinic") was established and is located in the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics. It is equipped with an electronic body composition analyzer and further equipment to perform anthropometric assessment. The clinic conducts research projects and is planning to implement a new approach of cognitive behavior therapy in spring 2016/2017 (SER 3.2.1).

The University counts with eight libraries spread across the Beirut site, Debbieh site, and Tripoli branches. The Medical Sciences Library is located on Beirut and on Tripoli campus and serves students of all Medical Sector Faculties of the University. The library can accommodate 114 users at its Beirut Campus and 72 users at its Tripoli campus at the same time, all of whom can benefit from the available photocopiers, printers and scanners. Interlibrary loan services are also available (SER 2.3.2; Annex J: p. 60-61).

The Library of Health Sciences contains 792 books, 11 dissertations and 150 multimedia inventories in the Beirut Campus (Annex J: p. 60). The inventory can be found in physical or electronic form. Students also have access to several electronic library full-text databases, such as Science Direct, Scopus, Access Medicine, CINAHL Plus and MEDLINE Complete. For more information please consult Annex J: chapter 5 (SER 2.3.2).

At the faculty level, the library committee, which is chaired by a member of the Department of Nursing and Dietetics, ensures the preparation of the list of

needed books and periodicals for the library upon the faculties' requests to satisfy students' learning needs. The library acquisition department will process and follow up on purchasing and receiving the books. The bibliographic information of new books will be catalogued. An electronic list of new arrivals will be issued to faculties for distribution to faculty members. The books will be delivered to the Medical Sciences library (SER 2.3.2).

The University library has had an agreement with the Lebanese Academic Library Consortium (LALC) since 2011 which allows the University to attain better prices from suppliers for electronic resource subscriptions (SER 2.3.2).

The library's opening hours are from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and on Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Students have access to the multi search database "EBSCO", which enables them to use other databases. This service is offered free of charge to all faculty, staff and registered students through the BAU portal system "I-connect". Through this portal, students will have the ability to add or drop their courses, manage their schedules, look up information about examinations, their grades and cumulative GPA. Furthermore, "I-connect" allows students to check their emails and keep online communication between them and their instructors. This tool also enables instructors to provide their students with lecture notes, course content supplements and announcements regarding exams and assignments. This system provides remote and on-campus access to the electronic library using subscription credentials. Mobile access is also available using the QR-code Reader App (SER 2.3.2; SER 1.6.7).

A computer lab, offered by the University, is also available for students to allow them internet access. Recently, BAU is providing wireless internet for all its registered students, available in the main building of Beirut campus (SER 2.3.1).

2.3.3 Quality assurance

Beirut Arab University has a Quality Assurance Center (QAC), the main function of which is to evaluate the academic performance of different faculties and to facilitate the improvement of the educational process within the institution (Annex O). Every Faculty of the University has a Quality Assurance Unit that is supervised by the Faculty dean.

The quality assurance system of the University includes the following procedures:

- Course evaluation questionnaires, in which students evaluate the quality of teaching and learning, conducted online through I-connect;
- Students' satisfaction survey, in which students evaluate the availability of learning resources and the support offered by the University and its units;
- Preparation of the staff development program in order to improve the qualifications of the academic staff members;
- Academic staff-members evaluation, which is monitored by the dean of the Faculty;
- The University's Quality Assurance Committee carries out site visits of each Faculty once per semester in order to monitor the academic performance with a special focus on undergraduate programs and the experiential learning ones. The Committee of the QAC prepares a visit report and forwards it to the University President, who then sends a copy of the report to the relevant dean to take appropriate actions.

In 2015, the University attained the institutional accreditation by a German accreditation agency (SER 3.1.1).

In the Nutrition and Dietetics Department, the curriculum has been achieved and enhanced based on international benchmark standards (Annex 3). This continuous enhancement is supervised by the FQAU and the UQAC, which perform regular internal auditing to assess the academic performance of the department and make sure the curricular changes are compatible with the University rules, regulations and policies.

The University claims to seek excellence in research. Due to this, the University has established a deanship for graduate studies as well as an Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Annex I), which are committed to apply BAU research policy (Annex D).

The Department of Nutrition and Dietetics assures that quality assurance is monitored by "everyone." All members of the department are expected to be involved in curriculum planning and development, meeting monthly at the departmental council to discuss departmental issues and concerns including curricular enhancement, staff members' issues, students' issues and quality assurance related issues (SER 1.6.2).

At the beginning of the academic year, a course coordinator is assigned under the supervision of the dean. By the end of each semester, a course report is written related to each course offered during the relevant semester. This report includes statistical information about students' attendance, students' assessment and examination results, topics taught and their relevant hours, used teaching and learning methods, administrative constraints, course enhancement suggestions and an action plan for the following year. Any recommendations regarding revision of the course intended learning outcomes, the assessment method, modification of the course content requirements for special tools/equipment for implementing the course objectives or any other difficulty faced during the semester are stated in the course report. The course report is then submitted by the termination of the course. Noted issues will be discussed in the departmental council and then raised at the Faculty council. The course report will also be analyzed by the UQAC representatives during their regular visits to the Faculty every semester to evaluate the academic performance (SER 1.6.3).

Other measures taken for the purpose of course evaluation and enhancement are through feedbacks from stakeholders who are members of the Faculty Advisory committee as well as feedback from the students. Moreover, BAU has also included student representatives in the faculty's committees and councils to ensure their participation in decision-making, to get their feedback and to ensure their satisfaction (SER 1.6.3).

According to the University, practical relevance of the study program is assessed through feedback obtained from students during their rotations at different hospitals and the evaluation of the instructors from the rotation sites regarding their satisfaction with the students' performance. In addition, the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics carries out follow-up studies on graduated students working in various settings. The University states that 19 of its Nutrition & Dietetics graduates are completing their Master's degrees in various competences; a more detailed analysis based on 35 graduates of the program showed that approximately 55% of graduates work as private or hospital-based clinical dietician, 30% in food safety, 10% in community nutrition and 5% in humanitarian service. To mitigate potential response bias in these results, the University states that it is planning to conduct a more comprehensive survey on all institute graduates. The feedback and comments of the stakeholders, who are members of the Advisory Committee of the Faculty,

are also of upmost priority to assess the study program. The feedback and follow-up data are collected and discussed in the Faculty Council (SER 1.6.4).

The University assures that all relevant information concerning the study program is published on the University's website. Information posted includes but is not limited to the mission and vision of the Department, program overview with course descriptions, degree requirements and study plan. Also, the connect system provides students with information about their academic requirements; in terms of number of credit taken/left, the complete academic plan and their grades.

In concern with the support of students at the University, every faculty member is assigned as an academic advisor to a group of students providing them with counseling and guidance. The academic advisor assists in course selection and helps solve any issues or problems his/her advisees might encounter throughout their enrollment.

The dropouts during the study process (AOQ 29) are reasoned by the transfer to other major study programs, the delay in earning required credits requested for the upper level, the student's withdrawal from the program, or their final dismissal from the University.

All newly enrolled students attend a number of orientation sessions organized by the Student Affairs Deanship with the participation of the staff member of the Faculty. New students also receive a student file, brochures and a CD containing information about the Faculty and departments, requirements for graduation, duties and rights and the registration for University, Faculty and Department mandatory and elective courses.

Students are also introduced to the BAU's "Code of Ethics" (Annex E), a document that is meant to determine the basic ethical standards for the conduct of persons active within the context of the University, to adhere to the freedom of scientific research and teaching, to promote social responsibility and equality amongst individuals regardless race, religion, family status, gender, age, physical disability or social status and to encourage creative thinking and constructive criticism. In case of violation of the University's Code of Ethics, the dean of the Faculty issues a Misconduct Citation to the student for his/her breach of the University's customs and rules, which are listed in the Code of Ethics and Conduct. If three misconduct citations are issued throughout the

enrollment period, students may be suspended by the University Council (Annex A: Rules and Regulations, XII/10).

In regard to the promotion and concept of equality, the University assures that diversity is one of the seven core values of the institution. According to the University's "Code of Ethics" (Annex E), the tolerance and respect of differences of others is to be promoted. In its Strategy 2013–2018 (Annex C), the University states that the facilities for students with physical disabilities have to be secured.

2.4 Information about the University

Beirut Arab University is a private non-profit institution for higher education that was founded by the Lebanese El-Bir and Ishan Society in 1960 with the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Law. Other faculties were established in the course of the following years, the last one being launched in 1995. The Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) was established in 2008 to meet the rising needs of the local community for professionals specialized in health sciences and is the most recent addition to the Beirut Arab University (Annex J). It hosts the departments of Nursing, Nutrition and Dietetics, Physical Therapy and Medical Laboratory Technology.

The University campus is located in the center of Beirut, Lebanon. The Faculty of Health Sciences is situated on the 5th and 6th floors of the Hariri Building, which is an annexation to the main campus that was constructed in 1978. In the recent years, the University has established three branch campuses in the cities of Debbie, Tripoli and Bekaa. At the moment, there are a total number of 8,659 undergraduate and 1,161 postgraduate students enrolled at the University. The University consists of the 10 following faculties, which together offer 42 undergraduate and 87 postgraduate study programs:

- Faculty of Human Sciences
- Faculty of Law and Political Science
- Faculty of Business Administration
- Faculty of Architecture-Design and Built Environment
- Faculty of Engineering
- Faculty of Science
- Faculty of Pharmacy
- Faculty of Medicine

- Faculty of Dentistry
- Faculty of Health Sciences

The University claims to be an educational institution classified as a non-profit organization. It is asserted that BAU's budget and expenses rely mainly on students' tuition fees and all other types of administrative fees that contribute to about 90% of the University's income. BAU has also delivered its stream of revenues in order to develop a new funding model in the light of a highly competitive market. The revenue streams are detailed as follows: BAU specialized clinics (the dental clinics, the nutritional and weight management clinic); consultancy services, laboratory testing and experimentation; Center for Continuous Professional Development (CCPE); Governmental funds for scientific research projects at BAU, such as those coming from the National Council for Scientific Research (CNRS); Philanthropic funding coming mainly from donating bodies. Moreover, the European Union (EU) provides funding through the Tempus Program. In addition, the University has invested in the banking market seeking additional revenue opportunities. According to the University, the initiative was successful, adding a substantial amount of revenues. All funds are directed to finance BAU activities including salaries and the development process in different fields (SER 2.3.4).

The Department of Nutrition and Dietetics was established in 2008. The number of registered students at the department for 2016 is of 145 students (SER 3.2.1). Currently the Department is running the bachelor program "Nutrition and Dietetics" only.

In January 2013, a nutrition clinic ("Nutritional and Weight Management Clinic) was established.

Since spring 2013-2014, all students of the Medical Sector Faculties have started participating in Interprofessional Education for Healthcare course (IPEH512) as a mandatory requirement for graduation. In IPEH, students encounter clinical case scenarios and try to solve problems using evidence based practice along with students from other medical fields including Medical doctors, pharmacists, dentists, nurses and physical therapists. Through interactive learning, students will explore ways in which their professions can work together in order to optimize patient's care while respecting each other's roles and responsibilities.

The University has an official research policy (Annex D) and it considers the contribution to the development of research as one of its main strategies (Annex C). The research facilities of the University include the Institutional Review Board (IRB) which is responsible for the assurance of protection of humans and animals involved in research or related activities (Annex I). Furthermore, the University has a Research Centre for Environment and Development, the Centre for Continuous Education, the Academic Development Centre and other (see Annex L). The University provides also specialized laboratories in each Faculty according to the requirements of specializations.

3 Expert Report

3.1 Preliminary remarks

The Accreditation Agency for Study Programs in Health and Social Sciences (hereinafter AHPGS) was commissioned by Beirut Arab University (hereinafter the University) to accredit the study program Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) in "Nutrition and Dietetics."

The on-site visit evaluation of the study program B.Sc. "Nutrition and Dietetics," as well as the study programs B.Sc. "Medical Laboratory Technology" and B.Sc. "Nursing," offered at Beirut Arab University, was carried out on May 16 and 17, 2017 in Beirut, Lebanon.

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

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

As representatives of higher education institutions and of professional practice:

Prof. Dr. Georg Abel

University of Applied Sciences of Health and Prevention, Saarbrücken, Germany
Professor of Nutritional Sciences

Prof. Dr. rer. nat. Friedrich Hofmann, MD

Bergische Universität Wuppertal, Germany
Professor emeritus of Occupational Physiology, Occupational Medicine and Infection Protection;
Member and former Chair of the Permanent Vaccination Commission of the Robert Koch Institute

Prof. Dr. Johannes Keogh

Fulda University of Applied Sciences, Germany
Professor of Nursing Sciences

Prof. Dr. Kathrin Kohlenberg-Müller³

*Fulda University of Applied Sciences, Germany
Professor of Clinical Nutrition*

Ms. Beate Methke

*University Hospital Freiburg, Department of Immunology, Germany
Medical Technical Assistant*

Dr. Martina Plaumann, MPH

*Federal Centre for Health Education, Cologne, Germany
Director of the agency of the National Prevention Conference*

Prof. Dr. Birgit Vosseler

*University of Applied Sciences, St. Gallen, Switzerland
Dean of the Department for Health Care and Vice President of the University;
Professor of Nursing Sciences*

As a student representative:

Ms. Franziska Jagoda

*University of Witten/Herdecke, Germany
Master Studies of Nursing Sciences*

According to the *Rules for the Accreditation of Study Programs and for System Accreditation* (determined by the decision of the Accreditation Commission, of 08.12.2009 in the version of 20.02.2013, Drs. AR 20/2013), the task of the experts in the accreditation procedures is to evaluate the education concept of a specific study program as well as to estimate the possibility of its successful implementation. This concerns, in particular, qualification objectives of the study program, its conceptual integration into the system of education, the concept of the study program, feasibility of the content and scope of studies, the examination system, study-relevant collaborations, personnel, material and space resources, transparency and documentation, application of the results of quality assurance for further development of the study program (it is especially important to present the analyses and evaluation results of student workload, academic accomplishments and employment of graduates, which are to be documented and taken into account within the framework of continuous development of the study program), as well as the provision of gender equality and equal opportunities. The experts should also take into consideration and verify whether study programs with special profiles (e.g.

³ The experts shown in italics have not participated in the on-site visit of the University.

dual, part-time, occupational or distance learning study programs) comply with the relevant criteria and requirements.

The on-site visit of the experts is carried out in accordance with the *Rules for the Accreditation of Study Programs and for System Accreditation* (determined by the decision of the Accreditation Commission, of 08.12.2009 in the version of 20.02.2013, Drs. AR 20/2013) as well as the *Criteria for the assessment and accreditation procedures of study programs at foreign higher education institutions* developed by AHPGS. After the announcement of the accreditation decision, the expert report will be published as a part of the final Assessment Report.

3.2 Basic information about the study program

It is the main objective of the Bachelor study program “Nutrition and Dietetics” offered at the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics, Faculty of Health Sciences, Beirut Arab University to prepare qualified entry level nutritionists and dietitians with sufficient clinical nutrition knowledge and skills as well as essential knowledge base in food, food sciences and food systems which enables them to promote the public’s health through research and assessment, policy development, and assurance of programs for community services. The program is also designed to equip nutritionists and dietitians with a sense of responsibility and professionalism and to work and communicate effectively within a multi-disciplinary health care team to meet the needs of the community and the region, while accounting for professional ethics and being committed to lifelong learning.

The study program requires the obtainment of 101 credit hours (CH) according to the University’s credit hour system referring to the US American credit hour system. One credit hour is equal to one contact hour of lectures or to two or three hours of tutorial, practical and/or clinical classes per week. Every credit requires two hours of self-study. The workload of the program constitutes 1,875 contact hours, of which 1,215 are lecture hours, 480 are laboratory hours and 180 are clinical hours. Additionally, the program requires 2,955 hours of independent study. The language of instruction is English.

The bachelor study program “Nutrition and Dietetics” is a full-time study program with a regular duration of three years/six semesters and two summer

terms. It consists of a minimum of 40 courses to be covered in three years of studies:

- 4 are University Mandatory Courses (7 credits),
- A minimum of 3 are University Elective Courses (9 credits),
- 7 are Basic Science Courses (21 credits),
- 23 are Nutrition Core Courses (58 credits),
- 3 are Major Elective Courses (6 credits).

Admission requirements of the program include a secondary school certificate or its equivalent. International applicants have to provide an equivalence certificate from the Equivalence Committee of the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education, which should confirm that their secondary school degree is comparable to a Lebanese one. In addition, students must pass an entrance exam, an interview and the BAU English language exam. Students are informed about the amount of the tuition fees in advance. Upon completion of the study program, students are awarded with the academic title "Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Dietetics." There are 50 study places annually available in the program. Admission takes place every fall semester. The first batch of students was admitted to the program in the academic year 2008/2009.

3.3 Expert Report

On December 12, 2016, the application documents of the University were made available to the expert group for written evaluation. The expert group assessed the Bachelor study program "Nutrition and Dietetics" based on the above mentioned *Criteria for the assessment and accreditation procedures of study programs at foreign higher education institutions*.

The on-site visit was carried out on May 16 and 17, 2017, according to the previously agreed schedule. Representatives from the head office of AHPGS accompanied the expert group.

The expert group met on May 15, 2017, for preliminary talks prior to the on-site visit. They discussed the submitted application documents and the results of the written evaluation as well as questions that had been raised. Furthermore, they prepared the plan of the on-site visit at the University.

In the course of the on-site visit, experts conducted discussions with the University management, the Deanship and representatives of the Faculty of Health Sciences and the Departments of Nutrition and Dietetics, Medical Laboratory Technology, and Nursing, and the teaching staff of the program “Nutrition and Dietetics” as well as with students currently studying in the three programs to be accredited. Furthermore, they inspected the learning premises, such as lecture halls, seminar classrooms, laboratories, the outpatient clinics, the library, computer classes, the cafeteria and the premises for student activities on Beirut Campus. Moreover, the experts had the opportunity to see the Debbieh Campus of Beirut Arab University which comprises the Faculty of Architecture, the Faculty of Engineering and the Faculty of Science.

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

- Beirut Arab University Research Report 2015-2016,
- Access to all documents concerning quality assurance at the Faculty of Health Sciences, such as entrance exams, internship reports, meeting minutes, etc.

The expert report is structured in compliance with the *Accreditation Criteria* of AHPGS, which were approved by the Accreditation Commission of AHPGS on September 30, 2015. The study program will be described and analyzed in a comprehensive manner below. The documents submitted by the University, the experts’ feedback to the documents, the observations made during the on-site visit, the results of discussions with the representatives of the University, Faculty of Health Sciences and the Department of Medical Laboratory Technology, and the students serve as the basis for the statements made in the expert report.

3.3.1 Program aims and their implementation

The students of the bachelor study program “Nutrition and Dietetics” become equipped with the cognitive, intellectual and practical skills needed for the implementation of evidence based dietary advice within the context of the nutrition care process model. Furthermore, the students are enabled to work within food service systems due to their ability to implement food safety and procurement standards. The students’ learning outcomes defined by the Department describe the accumulated knowledge, intellectual and practical skills,

and attitudes that students develop during the course of the study. These encompass knowledge about the fundamentals of basic medical, social and behavioral sciences, including chemistry, organic chemistry, biology, microbiology, biochemistry, anatomy and physiology, epidemiology and biostatistics as well as psychology and sociology. Furthermore, knowledge of nutrient standards, nutritional needs and dietary guidelines for different stages of the life cycle as much as components of nutritional assessment and community needs assessment in order to identify nutritional risks and interventions for the prevention and treatment of diseases are part of the study program's qualification objectives. Also competences in outlining the principles of research and evidence based practice in nutrition and dietetics and describing theories of behavior change and the role of the environment and culture influencing nutrition are to be gained within the study program.

During the on-site visit, the experts came to know that health enhancing and quality assuring measures in regard to healthy nutrition are even transferred, integrated and implemented in the University's cafeteria. The experts showed themselves impressed of the University's holistic concept that prepares students with theoretical and applied knowledge for the labor market but also makes use of and benefits from its programs' outcomes within the University itself.

In order to provide the students with broader knowledge in general, but also skills and attitudes that are considered essential to facilitate effective interprofessional collaborative practice, the Faculty applies interprofessional education of its health related study programs which was explained to the experts in a more detailed way on site. Additionally, the University requires a set of non-program specific mandatory and elective courses on University level for all students, among them Arabic and English language skills, a human rights introduction and communication skills.

On site, the University showed its strong commitment to personal development and social responsibility of the students and to enhance independent thinking and a comprehensive awareness to enable the students to make informed and socially responsible choices in agreement with their academic, professional and life goals. The faculty comprehensive Human Rights Center is a University initiative that assists students and accordingly their communities to a better understanding of their rights through raising awareness in the

course of formal and non-formal methods thus complementing their education throughout their university years and years after.

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

3.3.2 Structure of the study program

The Nutrition and Dietetics program consists of theoretical and clinical components. After the introduction to basic sciences such as biology and microbiology, general and organic chemistry and biochemistry, anatomy and physiology, and epidemiology and biostatistics, which are taught commonly for students of the Health Sciences and Medicine study programs, the students are introduced to the basics of nutritional sciences and dietetics. Thus, the "Nutrition and Dietetics" study program at Beirut Arab University has a strong foundation in natural sciences that serve as a basis for applying nutritional sciences.

As a consequence, during the second year, the program offers courses that span over aspects of specific nutritional needs, metabolism and pathological basis of nutrition related diseases and the corresponding assessment measures and meal planning. The dietary needs of specific life stages and disease condition are covered along with treatment and intervention modalities in parallel with basics of nutrition education while considering evidence based practice. The program further introduces basics of food technology and food chemistry.

The third year of the program focuses on professionalism and practical applications, such as food safety. The therapeutic nutrition practicum provides the opportunity to gain hands on experiences through virtual case simulation exercises. The research project gets the student into practical application of data collection, analysis and reporting.

The provided course handbook reveals a coherent structure and continuously increasing complexity of learning material and students' competence level, with the focus on specialization courses in the final stages of the education. The experts found that the number of course modules is appropriate for the achievement of the study program's objectives. They are structured in such a way to build upon prior knowledge and skills and are meticulously planned by topic on a weekly basis.

However, the experts determined that in the course of the basic sciences, general chemistry and organic chemistry are taught parallel during the first semester. As, from the experts' point of view, a couple of problems in organic chemistry can only be understood based on basic principles, such as atoms, molecules, periodic system of the elements, chemical reactions etc., they recommend teaching general and inorganic chemistry s first, e.g. with the double amount of hours during the first half of the first semester. Following, in the second half of the semester, basic principles and reactions in organic chemistry should be presented and discussed with the double amount of hours per week.

Supplementing the program-specific subjects, University mandatory courses (7 credits), that focus on Arabic culture and Arabic language, Human Rights as well as English and communication skills, are obligatory for all students enrolled at the University.

The Faculty of Health Sciences follows and implements a strong interdisciplinary and interprofessional approach which is firmly incorporated to the curriculum through the course "Interprofessional Education for Healthcare". The Faculty's explanations on site showed the staff's efforts on the one hand and the successful implementation on the other hand of the interprofessional approach in health care, reaching even into the University's outpatient clinic by now.

Thus, the experts conclude that the study program aims at providing students with specialized and interdisciplinary knowledge as well as professional, methodological and general competences.

As a whole, the study program comprises minimum 40 courses. Students are allowed to register, per semester, a number of credit hours that vary between a maximum of 18 and a minimum of 12 credit hours. All courses are completed within one semester. The regular study period is three years/six semesters.

On site, the University explained their credit hour system and its comparability again and showed the equivalence of the study program's 101 credits with a European Bachelor program; workload calculations are comparable as every credit requires two hours of independent study. From the experts' point of view, the program curriculum and its qualification objectives comply with the requirements of the higher education level.

The Department of Nutrition and Dietetics has signed cooperation agreements with eleven hospitals in northern, central and southern Lebanon. In the course of the studies, every student completes 480 practical hours in simulated laboratory environments in the University, followed by 180 hours of real clinical settings in the last semester, applied also in the University's outpatient clinic. These internships are incorporated into the curriculum and awarded with credit hours. Additionally, to obtain licensing for dietetic practice in the country by the Lebanese Ministry of Higher Education, dietetic interns have to spend 13 weeks of supervised practice in Clinical Nutrition, of which 3 weeks are directed to community nutrition services, and 6 weeks focus on food service management at the selected training site. The Department's *Dietetic Internship Manual* ensures that every student experiences clinical rotations in the fields of internal medicine, gynecology and obstetrics, oncology, pediatrics, surgery, coronary care, intensive care, community care and food service, and that every student is evaluated after the rotation. The experts confirm a successful and well conceptualized arrangement of internships, verified also through talks with representatives of the cooperating hospitals on site. The students are trained in nutrition counseling and guide patients individually regarding anthropometric parameters and supervision of nutritional behavior. Overall, the experts confirm a very good preparation of the students for their professional activity after graduation.

Furthermore, it was found that the University is attempting to transition away from traditionally didactic, teacher-centered methods to more active ones which encourage students to engage in the learning process and actively shape their courses of studies. As such, it was determined that the University encourages its students to take an active role in the creation of the educational process.

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

3.3.3 Admission and Feasibility

Admission policies and procedures along with the requirements are listed in the University's *Rules and Regulations for the Undergraduate Programs*. In order to be admitted to the Bachelor study program "Nutrition and Dietetics," students must complete the admission process for BAU, which entails holding the official Lebanese Secondary School Certificate or its official equivalent and passing an entrance exam as well as an English exam. Students who fail to

meet the English requirement must sign up for an intensive English course at BAU. Due to the nature of the practice, environment and responsibilities of Dietitians, the Faculty of Health Sciences defined that students have to be physically healthy and have to go through a physical assessment. However, on site the University pointed out that every student's physical condition is assessed individually in order to accept every student whose symptoms do not place them or their patients into physical or psychological danger. The experts find these requirements fitting and proportional to the study program and appreciate the individual consideration of the ability to study. Therefore, it was determined that the admission and student selection procedures correspond to the standards and learning objectives of the study program.

As every university in Lebanon, Beirut Arab University demands tuition fees. The University's aim is to provide a quality educational system with affordable tuition fees according to the students' economic situation. On site, the students confirm a very competitive price policy at BAU and the University's efforts to provide financial aid and scholarships. Among others, students that have siblings enrolled at the University during the same semester are eligible for a discount on their overall tuition fees. Children of University staff are exempted from tuition fees. Additionally, BAU provides direct financial support under defined conditions to students experiencing hardship in the form of tuition fees reductions. Furthermore, very skilled and talented students have the chance to apply for BAU's scholarships and awards. The students on site also indicate that assisting jobs at University institutions, such as the library, are distributed among students experiencing economic shortage. From the experts' perspective it can be confirmed that the tuition fees are well considered. The opportunities for economic release are remarkable.

The experts determine a relatively high amount of exams to be passed during the "Nutrition and Dietetics" study program as there are two continuous written assessments in every course plus a final examination at the end of the course/semester (see also Criterion 4). Thus, the University observes the students' performance by collecting and generating the Course Grade Point Average (GPA), the Semester Grade Point Average (SGPA) and the Cumulative Point Average (CGPA). BAU uses the Point Averages to guarantee feasibility. Students with a SGPA and a CGPA less than 2.00 receive an academic warning and are prevented from registering for more than 12 credit hours in the following semester. Additionally, BAU launched an *Assessment Booklet* in

order to provide teaching staff with practical guidelines to implement a competence oriented testing strategy, employing the full spectrum of test types. Asking the students on site about their workload, they consider the workload and the amount and the examination cycle appropriate. The type as well as the time of the different examinations is defined and communicated to the students transparently and at the beginning of the course.

The experts confirm that the feasibility of the study program is guaranteed and the amount of student workload is appropriate. As a whole, the organization of the education process ensures the successful implementation of the study program.

Beirut Arab University aspires to be among the higher education institutions that stand out in the domain of academic advising. Thus, BAU launched a concept about academic advising in order to guide students as to how to handle course selection, social issues and psychological problems. All information relevant to the "Nutrition and Dietetics" study program is published on the University's website, and students are able to access their internal records and study details through the i-connect system. Furthermore, advisors and counselors are available to students who find themselves in need of academic or administrative assistance. Every faculty member holds the position of academic advisor to a specific group of students. The students on site confirm a very well working consultation and advising system. The teaching staff is easily approachable and students are provided with academic support and guidance required for the accomplishment of the program-related assignments. Students are also provided with social support required for the organization of the learning process.

The University has a non-discrimination policy for disabled students, and accepts and supports them on a case-by-case basis. The council of each department is responsible for making such decisions. Therefore, it was determined that students with disabilities and/or chronic illnesses receive compensation with regard to the requirements of the study process.

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

3.3.4 Examination system and transparency

The University uses a continuous assessment process to ensure the quality of education for its students and graduates. This is achieved by evaluating the

performance of the student through a series of exams and tests that are scheduled during the academic semester in the faculties. The continuous assessment is carried out in the 7th and 12th week of the semester; the final course exam is taken in the 16th week at the end of the course/semester. The minimum passing grade for faculty and university requirement courses is "D". Such courses will be included in the CGPA. In case of having a grade "D-", the student must repeat the course. In case of a failed mandatory course, the student can repeat it until he/she passes. Failed elective courses can be repeated or replaced by another elective. Students may repeat any course(s) they passed only once to improve their CGPA. The evaluation and grading system is determined in BAU's *Rules and Regulations*.

In the experts' opinion the study program requires a very high amount of exams which causes a high workload not only for students but also for the teaching staff (see also Criterion 3). Discussing the issue on site, apparently students and staff are satisfied with the exam procedures and see clear benefits in the current practice. The transparency at the beginning of each term makes the great number of assessments during and at the end of each semester manageable. The examinations are coordinated with the "Nutrition and Dietetics" program specific learning outcomes, and consist of multiple assessment methods including written exams, quizzes, practical exams, reports, seminars, presentations, discussions, and the evaluation of other submitted materials such as logbooks and portfolios.

Students of the "Nutrition and Dietetics" study program are not explicitly required to elaborate a bachelor thesis. On site, the program representatives show that the study program incorporated an obligatory research project into the curriculum that has to be conducted and presented by every student in the last year of their studies. As a consequence, the experts confirm that the study program requires the students to apply research methodology and to train academic writing and, thus, prepares the students for further studies on Master level.

Thus, the experts conclude that the examinations, although numerous, keep the students focused on their studies and serve to determine whether the envisaged qualification objectives have been achieved or not.

The University accepts transferring credits from external higher education institutions (HEIs), provided that four conditions are met: (1) the transferred

courses are similar in content and credits to those to be replaced; (2) the transferred courses were passed with a C or better; (3) the courses were completed less than five years ago; and the total number of transferred credit hours does not exceed 50% of the total credit hours required to graduate. These requirements are enumerated by the University's "Student Manual." The experts appreciate that the University has a system of assessment, conversion and recognition of students' competences, credits and periods of study acquired and completed at other HEIs and encourage the University to also develop a concrete system for the acceptance, conversion and recognition of achievements earned in non-academic contexts (e.g. professional and technical experience), as the University already realizes for nurses who hold the Technique Superior to facilitate the upgrade to a Bachelor Degree in Nursing.

As stated above, the University's non-discrimination policy protects those with disabilities or chronic illnesses from suffering discrimination and provides them a framework within which to submit actionable claims or to receive support from the University. However, due to the healthcare nature of the study program and out of concern for the health of the students and patients therein, the experts understand that students with illnesses which jeopardize the physical or mental health of others must be excluded from the program, notwithstanding the non-discrimination policy.

The University maintains a website and an internal database through which information about available study programs, admission requirements, examination regulations, measures taken for students with disabilities, current events and activities at the University, student grades, course selection, and other academic and administrative matters can easily be obtained in a clear and readily accessible way.

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

3.3.5 Teaching staff and material equipment

Responsible for the professional teaching in the Bachelor study program "Nutrition and Dietetics" are five full-time core academic faculty members, with three of them holding a PhD in relevant fields. The core academic faculty carries an expected teaching load of 15-24 contact hours per week. Part-time teaching hours are based on the individual agreements with the University.

Teaching hours are also reduced for staff with administrative tasks, such as for the dean. To cover the teaching load and the variety of taught disciplines, five members of the Faculty of Health Sciences are associated to the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics to contribute to the teaching of the program. In addition, the Department employs one laboratory instructor. Due to cooperation with international universities, the Department makes use of the opportunity to invite guest lecturers in addition to the established teaching staff and, thus, ensures the incorporation of new perspectives and topics into the classes.

The experts find the amount of human resources allocated to the program to be sufficient to carry out its functions. The lecturers and professors as well as the laboratory instructor within the Bachelor program "Nutrition and Dietetics" are in possession of academic and technical credentials and experience adequate to their jobs. The University has set requirements for the different positions in its *Policies and Bylaws* and its guideline for hiring new faculty. The University informs its employees about opportunities for personal and professional development in clear ways, and actively encourages their participation in workshops, training courses, and conferences intended to further their ability which is confirmed during the talks with the staff on site. Additionally, the University's mission emphasizes fairness and equality in recruitment of employees at all levels; this accountability ensures a degree of transparency that fulfills the experts' requisite criterion.

On site, the experts were shown around the University's and the Faculty's premises. The experts were impressed with the quality and vastness of the laboratories and clinical areas used to train students in the Faculty of Health Sciences in general and in the Bachelor program "Nutrition and Dietetics" in particular. Both through the University's submission of floor plans of its laboratories, simulation rooms and other technical infrastructure and the experts' tour of the University's facilities during the on-site visit, it was ascertained by the experts that the Bachelor study program "Nutrition and Dietetics" has ample available teaching facilities at its disposal. The laboratory infrastructure and the equipment, such as software for analysis of dietary records and generation of diet plans (nutritionist pro, NUTVAL, EPIINFO, ENA, MENDELEY, SPSS), are suitable to guarantee a high level of teaching, practicing and research. The Faculty's nutrition clinic, using the software and necessary electronic equipment, allows individualized nutrition counseling and dietary man-

agement directed at the community under supervision. Notwithstanding the high standard of infrastructure and the appreciated transfer of knowledge to University structures, such as the cafeteria (see Criterion 1), the experts see a chance of improving the program by installing a teaching and experimental kitchen for incorporating contents of applied dietetics and respective supervised practical courses into the curriculum before the students start their clinical supervised training which is required by the Lebanese government after graduation.

From the experts' point of view the new outpatient clinic that BAU is implementing has to be highlighted. It is not only meant to provide low-cost community health services but also to practice the interprofessional approach towards health care.

The University hosts several libraries at its various campuses; relevant for the Bachelor study program "Nutrition and Deitetics" is the Medical Sciences library on Beirut campus which was visited by the experts on site and is shared by students of all medical sector faculties, including pharmacy, medicine and dentistry. It contains ca. 4,700 printed books, 10,000 e-books, 110 theses, 200 visual media and access to e-journals and full-text databases such as Science Direct, Scopus, Access Medicine, CINAHL Plus, MEDLINE Complete, etc. The University's policy for acquiring new library materials takes into consideration the ongoing advancements on the level of academic curricula while keeping in mind research needs. There is a faculty-level Library Committee which ascertains which materials are in students' need, and purchases and receives same. From the experts' point of view, also the yearly budget for purchasing new items is more than adequate.

Thus, the experts conclude that the University has adequate funding to ensure that the accessibility of material equipment, space and learning resources for all participants of the study program, including all practical elements contained therein, is guaranteed.

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

3.3.6 Quality assurance

From the experts' point of view, Beirut Arab University has a well-structured system of quality assurance spread across all of its units. The University's Quality Assurance Center (UQAC) has been established at the University and

is supervised by the University President. At each faculty of the University, a Quality Assurance Unit has been established (FQAU) and is supervised by the faculty dean. Students are involved in each faculty's Quality Assurance Unit. Quality assurance rooms are prepared in each faculty, in which all relevant documents are kept readily accessible for the responsible staff members. The Quality Assurance Units are in charge of monitoring the development of the faculties, their programs and regulations. Twice annually, the BAU Quality Assurance Committee visits each faculty.

On site, the experts had the opportunity to visit the Quality Assurance Unit's room and accessed all documents, such as meeting minutes, questionnaires, internship reports and evaluations, admission procedure and entrance exam documents etc.

The University carries out internal and external quality assurance procedures on a cyclical basis, among them course evaluations, student satisfaction surveys and exit surveys. At the end of each semester, a course report is written containing statistical information about student attendance, assessment and examination results, topics taught, didactic methods, suggestions for course enhancement and an action plan for the next semester. The students on site report that, apart from the anonymous written evaluations, the teaching staff is easily approachable in case of any support needed or claims to be made. The results of the internal quality assurance management system are applied for the continuous development of the study program. In doing so, the University takes into consideration the quality evaluation results as well as the analyses of students' workload, their academic accomplishments and feedback from graduates. The quality assurance processes at the University involve all tiers of involved individuals, including students, instructors, administrators, alumni and trustees. The curriculum of the Bachelor study program "Nutrition and Dietetics" has been enhanced and developed based on international benchmarks and standards and attending the recommendations of the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the Faculty advisory committee, as well as representatives from the labor market. The program enhancement involved the redistribution of the basic and professional courses to allow early exposure to professional concepts. All members of the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics must be involved in curriculum planning, monthly departmental meetings and addressing issues on multiple levels within the department. The FQAU and UQAC engage in continuous internal auditing to

both assess academic performance/growth and to ensure compatibility with University regulations and objectives. Additionally, the Institutional Review Board and the Deanship for Graduate Studies uphold BAU's quality assurance policies in research capacities.

The experts conclude that the University has a documented and published concept of quality assurance, education process, teaching and research, and that the University collects, analyzes and applies information related to the management of internal quality assurance.

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

3.3.7 Gender equality and equal opportunities

BAU has committed itself to its strategy of providing an embracing environment for academic creativity and development, installing explicitly the concept of social responsibility, while respecting diversity and multicultural understanding. According to that mission, the University presents itself on site as a very tolerant and open minded institution that strives to provide students with a broad education that includes social responsibility a better understanding of their rights (see Criterion 1). The University aims at providing higher education to all applicants, regardless of sex, nationality, religion, or social/familial background. To put that into practice, BAU is known for offering study programs for a well-considered and reasonable price (see Criterion 3). Furthermore, the University provides scholarships for talented students, as well as need-based student assistant jobs and tuition fee reductions for siblings.

On site, the experts had the opportunity to speak to male and female students of different nationalities and different religious backgrounds. The students report to have chosen BAU not only for the competitive tuition fees but also because they knew they would be supported and tolerated by teachers and students alike, regardless of their individual backgrounds. Both staff and students highlighted the absence of discrimination in any regard as a remarkable feature of BAU. This indicates how strongly issues of "equal opportunities" are anchored in the institution's vision and mission.

Regarding students with disabilities, the University has ensured easy access for wheelchairs; ramps and passages are available. As BAU explicitly welcomes all students, regardless of potential disabilities or chronic illnesses, the

University and the respective instructors strive to provide individual solutions in examinations according to the student's disablement.

The experts conclude that the University has taken actions on the provision of gender equality and promotion of equal opportunities for students with particular living circumstances.

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

3.4 Summary

The overall impression of the University is very positive. Beirut Arab University presents itself convincingly as an open-minded and dynamic institution with willingness to import new ideas and recommendations for further enhancement. A number of additional favorable characteristics and achievements of the study program were demonstrated by the management of the University, the representatives of the faculty, those of the department as well as of the student body. These are interdisciplinary education, a well-balanced correlation between theory and practice, an excellent infrastructure and a strong commitment to personal development and social responsibility. As a whole, the study program prepares qualified dietitians with a strong base in natural sciences educated and prepared for the labor market through close combination of practical training and theoretical studies. The study program benefits strongly from the Faculty's nutrition clinic, offering the opportunity for nutrition counselling and supervised care of patients for a longer period of time.

Based on the information from written documents and the results of the on-site visit, the experts came to the conclusion that the study program "Nutrition and Dietetics" offered at the Beirut Arab University fulfills the above assessed criteria. Hence, the experts decided to submit a recommendation to the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS for a positive decision regarding the accreditation of the study program.

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

- General and inorganic chemistry should be taught first, and, based on that, be followed by classes in organic chemistry.

- A system for the acceptance, conversion and recognition of achievements earned in non-academic contexts (e.g. professional and technical experience) should be developed.
- A teaching kitchen for incorporating contents of applied dietetics and respective supervised practical courses into the curriculum should be installed.

4 Decision of the accreditation commission

The decision of the Accreditation Commission of 25 July 2017

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

The on-site visit of the University took place on May 16-17, 2017, according to the previously agreed-upon schedule.

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

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

The study program requires the obtainment of 101 credit hours (CH) according to the University's credit hour system. The regulated study period in the program "Nutrition and Dietetics" is six semesters / three years. The study program comprises 40 mandatory courses, covering mandatory and elective University courses, basic science courses and nutrition core courses as well as major elective courses. The bachelor study program "Nutrition and Dietetics" is completed with the awarding of the academic degree "Bachelor of Science."

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

The bachelor study program "Nutrition and Dietetics" is accredited for the duration of five years, until September 30, 2022.

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 articulated in the expert report.