

10 February 2011

The Committee for the evaluation of Nursing Study-Programs
by
Ms. Alisa Elon
Coordinator
Quality Assessment Unit (QAU)
The Israeli Council for Higher Education (CHE)

Shalom,

**Re: Response to the report of the Evaluation Committee in the field of
Nursing at the University of Haifa**

On behalf of the University of Haifa, I'd like to express my gratitude for the work of the Committee and for their insightful comments. The Department of Nursing has responded to most of the specific comments of the Committee in the attached letter.

I'd like to respond to recommendation 3 in the Research Chapter: "Offer full promotion and tenure recognition for participation in interdisciplinary research": The criteria for promotions are identical for all members of staff. These do not differentiate between interdisciplinary and non-interdisciplinary work.

Yours sincerely,



Prof. David Faraggi
Rector

cc: Prof. Aaron Ben-Ze'ev, President
Prof. Batia Laufer, Vice Rector
Prof. Shai Linn, Dean of Faculty of Social Welfare and Health Sciences
Dr. Dorit Pud, Head of the Department of Nursing
Prof. Nahum Finger, Chairman, Subcommittee for Quality Affairs
Council for Higher Education
Ms. Michal Neuman, Head, Quality Evaluation Unit, Council for Higher Education

Responses to the evaluation of the committee of the Council of Higher Education for the Department of Nursing (DON) program at the University of Haifa

It is with great satisfaction that we read the committee's (EC) overall impression that *"the DON is meeting their goals with their focus on multi-disciplinary research, the development of an innovative curriculum, their cutting-edge teaching methods, and their community involvement"* (p. 5). They also pointed out that *"faculty members in the DON are proud of their accomplishments and aware of the challenges they face in providing quality nursing education to their students and in developing programs of research"* (p. 5).

We thank the committee members for their efforts and appreciate the insightful observations and suggestions provided in regard to our curriculum, procedures, and development. We believe that the committee's report will generate a productive learning process in our department that will enable us to further develop our curriculum, research, and teaching strategies.

Following is our response to the committee's specific recommendations on our department's programs, students, and faculty:

1. BA program

We agree with the committee that there is a need to reevaluate the core curriculum mandated by the Ministry of Health (MOH). Indeed, the Faculty routinely devotes time and energy to review our curriculum, taking into account the changes in health care delivery and the roles for which nurses must be prepared. Following the EC recommendation, we will make every effort to encourage the MOH to broaden the choice of elective courses. This could be better achieved if all nursing departments in Israel were to jointly

work towards this goal, and therefore we intend to raise this issue in the Israeli Forum for Heads of Departments of Nursing. We believe that such action will enable the flexibility needed to facilitate the specialization of different academic nursing departments in Israel and will bring about a more diversified workforce in terms of the core supplementary academic and related nursing expertise.

As for the recommendation to explore new ways of strengthening our collaboration with the Faculty of Medicine at the Technion, we have established a steering committee to lead this process for change. A document has already been sent to the Dean of our Faculty highlighting the need to separate the teaching of the pre-clinical from the clinical courses. The DON will be responsible for the clinical studies, with the goal that clinical nursing knowledge be taught primarily by expert nurses. For the time being, the pre-clinical courses will remain under the purview of the Faculty of Medicine.

We thank the EC for their innovative idea of team teaching by the nursing and the medical faculty, each in their own areas of expertise. We believe that such cooperation will better prepare our students as well as the medical students to function in interdisciplinary teams in clinical settings after they graduate. The newly appointed steering committee is also working towards this aim and intends to discuss these issues with the Faculty of Medicine and together explore innovative ways for collaboration.

We assume that the EC recommendation to use a simulation center is in reference to the HPS (Human Patient Simulator) laboratory. Indeed, according to the nursing literature from the last decade, HPS is considered to be a highly

effective method for training in basic nursing skills prior to clinical experience. To date, our department has not been inclined to establish a simulation laboratory due to our concerns that it might narrow students' critical thinking skills and strengthen a bio-medical approach to nursing care, rather than a broader bio-psycho-social model for care. It is our belief that a good therapeutic nurse-patient relationship should be taught in situated, contextualized, and integrated situations that are as close as possible to real-life situations. Therefore, we have developed a range of other original simulation methods in order to teach basic and advanced nursing skills in clinical settings. For example, we encourage our clinical instructors to integrate written scenarios and simulation games into the process of teaching and evaluating, and we have designed special learning assignments in simulation methods. Nevertheless, in light of the benefits of simulation and in line with the EC recommendation, we will discuss the possibility of establishing a simulation center with the University authorities and will explore ways to integrate our vision with that of the EC. Moreover, we have joint a national-level research group that assembles together all the Nursing departments in Israel, in order to apply for a Tempus grant that among others, aims to develop, assimilate and appraise simulations into the nursing curriculum.

As for the recommendation to implement a timely student notification process for clinical site assignments that will allow students to make provisions for family and work obligations, we will do our best to improve the current situation. First, we will arrange the final exams that are prerequisite to clinical assignments early enough to allow us to plan ahead. Second, we will request

a yearly plan from all the health organizations with which we are connected so as to coordinate assignment to the clinical sites.

2. RN-BA program

Regarding the need to increase enrollment in the RN-BA program in order to upgrade the knowledge and skills of nurses in the workforce, we have opened two new programs for minority populations, one for ultra-Orthodox nurses in Bnei Brak (the central region of the country) and the other for Arab nurses in Nazareth (in the northern region). By doing so, we expect to improve the accessibility to academic nursing programs in Israel, especially for marginalized groups. In all of these programs, we currently provide several venues for improving computer literacy as applied to academic writing skills, including literature search workshops (joint program with the library staff) and teaching the use of nursing and health-related literature databases. In addition, clinical training now includes learning the use of electronic medical records (EMRs) in order to keep pace with clinical practice in hospital and community settings. We also try to identify excellent students in the RN-BA programs and encourage them to directly continue with their MA studies in our department.

3. Students

We endorse the recommendation to expand the pool of qualified candidates to encompass individuals with prior university degrees. However, our department is now embarking on several new programs that primarily emphasize our vision to assimilate the academic skills required for nursing. As such, the current focus of our energy must be on evaluating these programs and reflecting on our curriculum and teaching methods before we can initiate new

programs. Moreover, such retraining programs for graduate students in academic fields other than nursing should mainly emphasize the clinical skills and knowledge acquired in clinical settings. Therefore, departments such as ours that are primarily research-oriented may not be the ideal setting for this kind of program. That being said, we would, of course, cooperate with any future national-level initiative to execute such a program.

4. Research

Several steps have already been taken to comply with the EC recommendation that mentoring for junior faculty is provided. First, the head of the department has initiated periodic meetings with the junior faculty in order to provide mentoring and guidance for academic and research-related issues. Second, several research groups have been established that purposely include both young and senior staff members. Third, our young faculty is being encouraged to maintain and nurture their relationships with their former doctoral mentors and any other leading researchers who may help them promote their growth in their unique areas of expertise.

In line with the recommendation to institute dedicated research grants for nurses, our department is now working on a proposal to establish a departmental research center. The proposed research center will tackle contemporary issues in nursing care by providing a platform for research projects that seek to bring about a lasting improvement in the practice of nursing and, more generally, in the delivery of health care and its broader social surroundings. It is envisioned that the innovative evidence-based understandings generated in the research center will gradually furnish an

infrastructure for the development of a more advanced and socially equitable nursing practice. One of the objectives of the proposed research center will be to encourage research by providing grants and seed money to graduate students and researchers in nursing. Indeed, our department has recently embarked on two MA nursing programs, which focus on promoting research skills in order to encourage nurses to engage in research. We expect our graduate students to be involved in the research projects initiated in our department. Moreover, most of our faculty members are active in advancing the research methods and skills of nurses working in clinical settings by providing workshops, giving lectures, and initiating collaborative research projects. Moreover, some of our faculty is engaged in professional nursing forums and associations.

In regard to the recommendation that a national PhD program be established, we would like to note that according to the University's regulations, we will be able to open a PhD program in nursing in our department within the next two years. Nevertheless, this recommendation will be discussed in the national Forum for Heads of Departments of Nursing.

As for the recommendation that students write their thesis in English, there is currently an option for students to do so.

5. Faculty

Part of our responses to the recommendations concerning the faculty members was discussed in the paragraph of the BA program.

We agree that the Department of Nursing should enhance the involvement of both adjunct and clinical faculty. In line with this recommendation, the Head

of the Department has also initiated periodic individual meetings with each of the adjunct faculty members. Similarly, members of the Division of Clinical Studies hold individual meetings with each member of the clinical faculty. We plan to invite all adjunct and clinical faculty to our departmental seminars and other activities, such as conferences, symposiums, and social meetings.

Moreover, we are in the process of initiating special seminars for the clinical faculty in order to bridge the gap between academia and practice by generating mutual discussions, joint research, and exposure to the research interests of the faculty. We also plan to hire a minimum of three PhD-level faculty members within the next two years.

Finally, as for the recommendation to institute a clinical track for nursing faculty with clinical expertise, we would like to note that such a track already exists in the University. Moreover, in line with our future plans to take responsibility for the clinical nursing studies, we intend to recruit more staff members to the clinical track.

6. Resources

We thank the EC committee for their productive suggestions that will help us to improve our resources. We intend to raise the recommended issues of appropriate classroom space and the addition of a full-time administrative position with the relevant authorities.