

**Self Evaluation by the Department of Occupational Therapy –
Responses to the Committee's Recommendations Appearing in the Specific and General Reports**

| Committee's recommendations | University's (U) and Department's (D) responses |
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| Specific Report | |
| 1. Mission, goals | |
| <p>1.1 There are some infrastructure factors that put an undue burden on senior faculty to continue to accomplish their missions of teaching and research. We recommend that the appropriate decision making bodies in the government and university consider alternative methods of supporting the growth and evolution of the Department of Occupational Therapy.</p> | <p>(D) We will continue to meet with all levels of the University of Haifa administration in order to develop creative ways to "support growth and evolution of the Department of Occupational Therapy, without sacrificing academic excellence."</p> <p>(U) The Rector of the University of Haifa considers the Department of Occupational Therapy to be one of the University's leading departments and is committed to its future development. Indeed, a half-time position has already been allocated to the Department (in order to complete the position of one faculty member filling a half-time position). Additionally, a post-doctoral fellowship was approved for a young scholar who is a leading candidate for a tenure-track position in the Department of OT in the future.</p> |
| 2. Study programs | |
| <p>2.1 We recommend restructuring the Master's (thesis option) so that it becomes part of the PhD program. Students with an interest in research should be recruited into the PhD program with the understanding that they will complete a Master's thesis as part of their PhD studies. We recommend that the Department award more credits for the thesis work, and reduce the course credit requirements.</p> | <p>(D) We will consider restructuring the Master's degree (with thesis) as an option. However, we wish to point out that while many clinicians are interested in achieving more advanced research skills via graduate studies, doctoral level studies remain a unrealistic commitment for many (due to difficulties in financial support as well as a lack of job promotion opportunities). We will aim to reduce the percentage of credits awarded for courses relative to those awarded for the thesis.</p> |
| <p>2.2 We recommend restructuring the Master's (non-thesis option) so that it becomes a clear option for those who wish to advance in practice and leadership. This track would involve more clinical courses and clinical experiences, as recommended by focus groups of graduate students. This type of coursework would clearly distinguish this option from the MSc/PhD option.</p> | <p>(D) We intend to implement this recommendation. It will entail enlargement of the size of the non-thesis track, with concomitant academic and support resources allocated by the University.</p> |

| Committee's recommendations | University's (U) and Department's (D) responses |
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| 3. Organization | |
| <p>3.1 We recommend that the promotion and tenure (P&T) committee establish clear and strict timelines to ensure timely decision making so that the process is completed in less than a year.</p> | <p>(D) We will lobby the University administration to implement this recommendation.</p> <p>(U) The promotion process, as is known, is a sensitive and complex process that does not depend entirely on internal factors. Many times the delays in the process are due to external issues such as the need to wait for material from external reviewers, and so on. The University administration is committed to the most efficient, ethical and rapid process, with the welfare of the faculty members under review as its main priority.</p> |
| 4.1 Teaching and learning | |
| <p>4.1 We recommend that the faculty systematically increase their emphasis on the PhD program, aligning new students with research themes of the department. To increase efficiency of mentoring, we recommend that BA projects, MSc theses and PhD dissertations align with faculty's research themes.</p> | <p>(D) We intend implement this recommendation.</p> |
| <p>4.2 We recommend that the Department establish a post-doctoral program.</p> | <p>(D) The senior faculty members do supervise post-doctoral fellows, and in many instances have received internal and external support for this. We refer current and potential fellows to the University's funding options, visa and other resources for them as described at http://postdoc.haifa.ac.il/Pages/post.aspx We aim to continue to do so, and to explore additional sources of support.</p> <p>(U) The University is continually trying to raise funds for post-doctoral fellowships.</p> |
| <p>4.3 The department has strong international connections for their work currently. We recommend that the Department enhance their international connections as a method for strengthening their department through collaborative research and use of educational technology for meetings and teaching.</p> | <p>(D) We propose to further international collaborations via distance educational technologies as well as invited visits to the University.</p> |

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|---|---|
| <p>4.4 We recommend that the University maintain a formal relationship with the Technion to ensure that the Technion is meeting the teaching needs of the Department. The connection between the health profession of occupational therapy and the medical school is an important one; this link makes collaborations in teaching and research possible. Further, we recommend that the University establish an oversight process to ensure that Technion is meeting the Department of Occupational Therapy's teaching needs.</p> | <p>(D) We have invested in our relationship with the Technion, and we maintain a formal liaison with them regarding the departmental teaching needs. We also organized a conference with the Faculty of Medicine in order to enhance research collaborations and strengthen the relationship between our Department and the Technion's Faculty of Medicine.</p> |
| <p>4.5 The Technion and the Department of Occupational Therapy need to set a formally scheduled meeting each year to review student teaching feedback and plan for changes based on the students' experiences for the next year, including setting their expertise within an occupational therapy framework for the students.</p> | <p>(D) We hold an annual meeting to discuss each year's teaching needs, reviewing them in order to improve teaching, based on our students' specific needs.</p> |
| <p>4.6 We recommend that the faculty establish a regular process for getting feedback from the clinical preceptors to identify strengths and areas for future development for the BA program as practice evolves.</p> | <p>(D) We will implement this recommendation.</p> |
| <p>4.7 We recommend that the faculty members regularly review the students' experiences in their programs so they can make appropriate adjustments to the courses of study. For example, students indicated that part of Year 2 is very intense, and had ideas for spreading the learning to other parts of the program. We recommend that the cohorts meet together with faculty so students can benefit from the overall curricular discussions.</p> | <p>(D) The Department will continue to respond to student feedback via review of course evaluations, meetings with class representatives, discussions of specific topics related to course work at staff meetings and a yearly review of the curriculum.</p> |
| <p>4.8 We recommend that the Department organize mentoring of year 1 students by year 3 and 4 students to make links between basic science and medical knowledge and the application to occupational therapy practice. This provides a context for early learning for year 1 students and a teaching/mentoring opportunity for the year 3 and 4 students.</p> | <p>(D) We will discuss this recommendation with our students and urge its implementation.</p> |

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|--|---|
| <p>4.9 We recommend that the faculty members work with the adjunct faculty to establish a formal process for mentoring new clinical adjunct teachers. The adjunct faculty feels very included and involved in the overall curriculum development and updates, but they feel they could benefit from specific support for the procedures of teaching and grading.</p> | <p>(D) We will implement this recommendation. In fact, starting from this year we will be using a structured method to improve mentoring in the Department.</p> |
| <p>4.10 We recommend that the Chair of the Department of Occupational Therapy meet annually with the adjunct faculty to review teaching evaluations and offer guidance for future teaching.</p> | <p>(D) The Chair of the Department of Occupational Therapy meets with the adjunct faculty, as well as with the other staff members, twice a year – at the beginning and end of each year, to review teaching evaluations and offer guidance for future teaching. In these meetings additional issues such as specific requests, needs etc. are discussed.</p> |
| <p>4.11 We recommend that the Department work with the University to establish a formal mentoring program for faculty members as they are developing their research programs. We acknowledge that faculty members in other departments may have expertise to support the occupational therapy faculty and vice versa. This could also occur at the beginning of additional interdisciplinary teaching and research collaborations.</p> | <p>(D) We will implement this recommendation.</p> <p>(U) The Rector's office has distributed guidelines for setting up a mentorship program to the Deans of the different Faculties to be implemented at the departmental level. Additionally, the Research Authority provides mentorship and guidance regarding all the issues associated with submission of grant proposals, etc.</p> |
| <p>5. Students</p> | |
| <p>5.1 Dropout rate is greater than expected (in the BA program ranges between 6%-19% and in the MSc with thesis between 7%-30%). We recommend that the Department examine the admission and support processes so they can develop strategies to decrease the dropout rate for both programs.</p> | <p>(D) We will review our admission and support processes in order to develop strategies aimed at minimizing students dropping out at all levels of the program.</p> |

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| <p>5.2 Infrastructure support for the PhD students, including funding and space, is not adequate. We recommend that the University provide more funding and office space for PhD students.</p> | <p>(D) We will increase our requests for additional funding and space for our doctoral students by the University.</p> <p>(U) a. The University administration notes that there are plans to build a new building for the Faculty of Social Welfare and Health Sciences in which the Department will be given the opportunity to design its own space.</p> <p>b. Over the last three years, the University has consistently raised the allocations for scholarships within the regular budget: in 2008/9 the scholarship budget was NIS 26.1 million; in 2009/10, it totaled NIS 28.9 million; and in 2010/11, NIS 31.5 million (an increase of NIS 5.4 million from 2008/9). We plan on increasing the budget for all our students, and at the same time expect our researchers to attain competitive research funds in order to finance research students as well.</p> |
| <p>6. Human resources</p> | |
| <p>6.1 We recommend that the University provide additional faculty positions to alleviate the teaching load of Senior Faculty. In addition to teaching 6-8 credits per term, they also supervise many graduate students, conduct major research programs, and provide administrative leadership within the department. Even when they add these additional responsibilities, their teaching loads remain excessive. We recommend that the University restructure the 'Teaching load' mechanism to allow a senior faculty member's teaching to be partially covered when they supervise many graduate students, have administrative leadership positions, and lead major research programs.</p> | <p>(D) We will lobby the University administration to increase our academic and support staff and to decrease teaching loads for faculty members who supervise large numbers of graduate students (Master's and PhD), have administrative leadership positions, and lead major research programs.</p> <p>(U) The number of weakly teaching hours is not determined by the University administration. The University is aware of the need to relieve the teaching load, especially for senior faculty members who supervise many graduated students, have administrative leadership positions and lead major research programs. The University tries, within the broader needs of the entire University population, to ease the load of faculty members as much as it can in any given year.</p> |
| <p>6.2 We see several possibilities for supporting reduced teaching loads of senior faculty:</p> | |

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| 6.2.1 The University could create another faculty category for full time faculty who wish to have a Teaching focus. | <p>(D) We agree with this recommendation and indeed are working to promote the issue, although we wish to keep the bulk of our academic staff focused on conducting research.</p> <p>(U) The Rector's office has recently appointed a Committee to provide suggestions for such a track. These suggestions will be brought to the appropriate bodies for their examination and approval.</p> |
| 6.2.2 The Department [with funding support] could hire additional tenure track faculty. | <p>(D) We will lobby for this recommendation.</p> <p>(U) See response for Recommendation 1.1.</p> |
| 6.2.3 The Department could create [with funding support] additional adjunct faculty positions with a primary teaching focus. | <p>(D) We will urge the University administration to implement this recommendation.</p> |
| 6.3 There is a lack of qualified high caliber academic occupational therapists to fill tenure track positions in Israel. Students may complete their PhD in Israel, but currently it appears that the Rector requires potential applicants for academic positions to have doctoral or postdoctoral training out of the country. To enhance the likelihood of attracting high quality applicants to Haifa University, we recommend the following potential solutions: | <p>(D) Since occupational therapists comprise a relatively small community, the number of occupational therapists with a PhD degree is very limited, and there is stiff competition among universities for those who have a PhD. If the University does not show flexibility in meeting a candidate's needs and limitations, we will not be able to attract qualified candidates. A lack of flexibility in this area may negatively impact the academic development of our Department.</p> |
| 6.3.1 Support strong potential applicants to do postdoctoral training in a different university and/ or a different department in Israel from the one they completed their doctoral work, [because each university and /or department is a different experience, and Israel has many strong researchers that can serve as mentors] or | <p>(D) We will urge the University to adopt this recommendation. Our faculty members collaborate with international researchers via short and longer visits to these locations and by applying for joint funding and co-supervision of graduate students.</p> |
| 6.3.2 Provide postdoctoral funding for highly qualified potential candidates, with the clear commitment to join the Haifa faculty upon completion of their international training (or reimburse funding). | <p>(D) We will move to have this recommendation implemented.</p> |

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| <p>6.4 The senior faculty members in the Department of Occupational Therapy are highly successful and have good insight about the required profile for productive researchers. We recommend that the Rector demonstrate confidence in the department's careful selection of potential applicants for Senior Academic positions by supporting some emerging talent for faculty positions.</p> | <p>(D) We will urge the University to adopt this recommendation and hope that the Rector will continue to consider the special needs of our Department and the limited number of qualified researchers with PhDs.</p> <p>(U) The University administration undertakes a thorough and methodical process of evaluation before recruiting young faculty members. This process is based on an international search for potential candidates and on an evaluation based on the academic excellence of the candidates as well as on specific priorities of the University.</p> |
| <p>6.5 We recommend that the University revise the promotion/ tenure process to acknowledge the factors that are relevant to occupational therapy faculty. First, competitive grant funding is difficult to obtain with funding agency emphasis on biomedical research. Secondly, grant amounts for occupational therapy research may not compare to biomedical grant amounts, even though they are prestigious within this discipline. Third, with a biomedical research emphasis, reviewers are not likely to understand the research designs and impact on occupational therapy discipline. Fourth, research in occupational therapy is most appropriately published in occupational therapy or rehabilitation journals, whose impact factors are not equivalent to those in the biomedical arena. The manuscripts are nonetheless highly relevant and have a clinical impact in advancing the field, and therefore need to be recognized as significant research and scholarly contributions.</p> | <p>(D) We will move to have this recommendation adopted. The promotion of our staff members is not only important to the Department's scientific development, but also to the Faculty and the University. Consideration of the specific characteristics of grants we receive (the difficulties mentioned regarding competitive funding; the competition with biomedical grants; the review process of grant proposal, etc.), is of utmost significance in this process.</p> <p>(U) The Rector's office is committed to promoting excellent faculty members. The achievements of faculty members are assessed according to the principles of excellence in each discipline. Moreover, in order to attain a fair assessment of the researcher's scientific contribution, as of last year we have allowed candidates for promotion to suggest up to three external reviewers to whom their file will be sent for examination.</p> |
| <p>7. Research</p> | |
| <p>7.1 We recommend the Department establish a formal mentoring program focused on early career tenure-track faculty. The program could involve senior faculty from both within and outside the Department. The mentoring program needs to be designed to help tenure-track faculty define their career goals; provide advice regarding promotion and tenure, and assist faculty in their scientific development.</p> | <p>(D) We have already begun to implement this recommendation.</p> |

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| <p>7.2 We recommend continuing to explore and develop funding sources (scholarships and stipends) to support full-time PhD students (e.g., Scholarships for Excellence in Studies for Research Students, Section 3.4.9, p.76); and to create research assistant positions for full-time graduate students. The Department's research productivity is excellent, but could be improved with the addition of a cohort of full-time PhD students. Most of the current PhD students are working in practice to support themselves while doing their doctoral work.</p> | <p>(D) We will act on both the university and governmental levels to have this recommendation implemented.</p> <p>(U) See response to Recommendation 5.2(b).</p> |
| <p>7.3 We recommend the Department examine strategies to recruit post-doctoral fellows. The addition of post-doctoral fellows, in combination with the new PhD program, will substantially enhance the Department's research infrastructure and scientific environment.</p> | <p>(D) We will continue to explore such strategies and continue to invest in this important issue by advertising on our website as well as in other media options and among our colleagues abroad.</p> |
| <p>7.4 The Department has developed productive research collaborations with faculty across the University and at other institutions. We recommend the Department consider enhancing the opportunities for interdisciplinary scientific collaboration by expanding the PhD program to include persons with academic backgrounds outside of occupational therapy and also pursue funding to establish an interdisciplinary center or institute within the Faculty with a focus on rehabilitation scholarship.</p> | <p>(D) We already have several PhD students who do not come from an occupational therapy background and continue to evaluate persons with other academic backgrounds. We will explore the possibility of establishing "an interdisciplinary center or institute within the Faculty with a focus on rehabilitation scholarship" with the recognition that funding will be needed to do so.</p> |
| <p><u>8. Infrastructure</u></p> | |
| <p>8.1 Office space for faculty is limited; the need for multiple individuals to share offices decreases work efficiency and undermines confidentiality. We recommend more small meeting rooms be made available for confidential meetings.</p> | <p>(U) See response to Recommendation 5.2(a).</p> |
| <p>8.2 There is a lack of space for graduate students; we recommend providing some workspace for them.</p> | <p>(U) See response to Recommendation 5.2(a).</p> |
| <p>8.3 The researchers within the Department are currently sharing space; we recommend the university provide additional space for research programs, particularly as they hire new research faculty.</p> | <p>(U) See response to Recommendation 5.2(a).</p> |

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|---|---|
| <p>8.4 Classrooms are currently located all over the campus. Although sometimes this can foster integration of students, this situation is problematic when students and/ or faculty must transition from the large group teaching, to small group or practical lab-based teaching within a short time. The Department needs small rooms with flexible furnishings for various types of small group teaching (e.g., group discussion, practicing assessments or interventions). Lack of adequate practical lab space prevents the use of specialized equipment. We recommend that consideration be given to building a separate building for the Faculty of Social Welfare and Health Sciences, particularly if these types of space challenges exist for the other Departments within the Faculty. This would greatly facilitate inter-professional education opportunities.</p> | <p>(U) See response to Recommendation 5.2(a).</p> |
| <p>9. Self-Evaluation process</p> | |
| <p>9.1 We recommend that the Department create an ongoing and systematic process for reviewing their programs as they have done for this review process.</p> | <p>(D) We will implement this recommendation. The Department dedicates a whole day at the end of each year to reviewing our program, establishing needed changes and maintaining a high standard.</p> |
| <p>General Report</p> | |
| <p>1. Program</p> | |
| <p>1.1 This is the first review of occupational therapy programs by the Council for Higher Education, and so the process introduces many new possibilities for supporting high quality occupational therapy education and research in Israel. For example, occupational therapy programs need to conduct routine surveys of their graduates, employers and clinical supervisors to keep apprised of the status of their graduates and to respond to formative feedback that can inform the curriculum.</p> | <p>(D) We often conduct surveys among our graduates, clinical employers and supervisors. However, in accordance with the Committee's recommendation, we will do so on a more routine basis.</p> |

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| <p>1.2 There is a shortage of occupational therapists in Israel in general, and some areas of practice are experiencing a more chronic shortage than others. For example, mental health and aging programs have a harder time recruiting personnel. Some occupational therapists are paid more than others, and this creates recruiting difficulties for certain agencies. The governmental ministries of education, health and welfare need to collaborate with occupational therapy faculty and clinicians to examine the inequity of pay in occupational therapy positions across settings to build capacity across service areas.</p> | <p>(D) Regarding the shortage of occupational therapists in Israel in general, and in some areas of practice in particular, we wish to stress that our Department invests great effort into enhancing the development of specific domains such as mental health and aging by recruiting new faculty members who are experts in these areas. We have added several new courses and upgraded existing courses in order to provide our students with greater exposure to recently developed theories and research in these domains. We also schedule intensive "study days" wherein the students and lecturers travel together to clinical locations to learn the theoretical and practical aspects of specific topics that are not covered in the classroom curriculum. Moreover, we make great efforts to find new clinical placements that specialize in these areas for our student's clinical practicums. Despite these initiatives, we recognize a continuing need to enhance the teaching of and research on specific topics, and we lobby at all levels, including the Ministry of Education, for assistance in developing these needed areas of expertise.</p> |
| <p>1.3 All the universities that sponsor occupational therapy programs employ a hierarchical decision making structure for hiring new faculty. While we agree that the leadership of the university needs to participate in the decision making process and approve the selection of candidates, we believe that these departments/schools of occupational therapy have developed to the point that they have the substantive experience to have more authority and responsibility to lead hiring decisions. In some cases, they may hire faculty with primary teaching responsibilities. In other cases, they may create an innovative proposal for supporting promising young researchers to complete their training [e.g., supporting them during a post-doctoral experience] with a commitment to return to the sponsoring university. It is not in the best interests of these growing departments/schools of occupational therapy to have imposed or rigid rules that have evolved from more established disciplines.</p> | <p>(D) We agree entirely that the leadership of the University should enable the OT Department to have more authority and responsibility in hiring decisions. This would definitely enable us to develop our Department as well as our profession. We aim to work with the University administration to raise their awareness of the specific needs of our Department so that they will support for our efforts to develop the Department and discipline, without sacrificing our high academic standards.</p> <p>(U) The Rector's office works continuously in collaboration with the Department's faculty members in all academic tasks, including recruitment and promotion of faculty members. The Rector conducts bi-monthly meetings with the Dean of the Faculty who is the person in charge of discussing the needs and expectation of all departments. Generally, members of the Department are involved in the professional committee in charge of the promotion of faculty members and are in constant communication with the Rector's office.</p> |

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| <p>1.4 We agree that the same standards of credentials and productivity need to be applied; additionally, we believe that the leadership in occupational therapy programs must have responsibility and accountability for making hiring decisions that meet the high standards in a way that is consistent with the occupational therapy discipline and mission of the department/school.</p> | <p>(D) We will continue making hiring decisions that meet the high standards of the occupational therapy discipline and mission of our Department.</p> <p>(U) See response to Recommendation 1.3 above.</p> |
| <p>1.5 The universities are requiring potential faculty applicants to leave Israel for doctoral and/or post-doctoral study, so although they are getting an extraordinary education here, and are quite adaptable as evidenced by their successes (e.g., publishing their work internationally), they are not considered 'eligible' for positions in the country. There are concerns about "inbreeding" (i.e., all degrees earned within one university). The concern about 'inbreeding' must not apply to the entire country of Israel; there are distinct graduate experiences across universities and disciplines with distinguished researchers within Israel that would provide diverse, unique and valuable training experiences for potential occupational therapy faculty.</p> | <p>(D) We understand and share the concern about 'inbreeding' raised by the Committee. We would like to re-emphasize the unique constraints under which we operate, namely the size of Israel's population, the small number of OT programs, and the need to teach in Hebrew (making foreign recruitment more difficult). We will continue to request that the administration consider special cases from time to time in order to fill departmental academic positions with the most appropriate candidates. A lack of flexibility in this area may negatively impact the academic development of our Department. We wish to point out that our faculty members are encouraged to, and, in fact, do regularly collaborate with international researchers via short and longer visits to these locations and by applying for joint funding and co-supervision of graduate students. Researchers from abroad are also regularly invited to our Department.</p> |
| <p>1.6 We recommend that for future Quality Assurance Evaluations of Occupational Therapy that the programs be required to include curricular philosophy, conceptual framework and design to provide an overarching view of their education programs.</p> | <p>(D) We accept the recommendation that future Quality Assurance Evaluations of the occupational therapy programs will include curricular philosophy, conceptual framework and design to provide an overarching view of the program.</p> |
| <p>1.7 The occupational therapy doctoral programs have a lot to offer developing researchers. We recommend that they market and accept qualified applicants from other disciplines to enrich their academic research programs.</p> | <p>(D) Since its inception two years ago, we have admitted 18 students into the doctoral program. We will continue to market the program, and actively recruit qualified applicants for our doctoral program.</p> |
| <p>1.8 Occupational therapists are very capable in Israel, and many already come back to graduate school. We invite the profession to consider when in their collective development they would be ready to move to the Master's degree being their entry degree to the profession.</p> | <p>(D) Moving to have a Master's degree serve as an entry-level degree to the profession is a challenging step. We plan to work towards this goal, albeit while recognizing that it will entail a lengthy process that will have to be conducted at all levels of the educational hierarchy.</p> |

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|--|---|
| <p>1.9 These programs have extremely loyal alumni, and yet there does not seem to be formal connections with alumni and the university programs. We recommend that the occupational therapy programs establish connections with alumni, and include information sharing and requests for donations to support departmental/school initiatives.</p> | <p>(D) We have invested a strong and continuing effort in establishing and nurturing relationships with alumni. For example, we developed a section of the departmental web site to enhance these links and a seminar series devoted to issues of interest to alumni. We also continue to develop numerous links with the community of clinicians such as joint research projects. In addition to strengthening these ties, the information we offer the OT community and the efforts to be in contact with them are expected to enhance donations to support the Department's initiatives.</p> |
| <p>2. Research</p> | |
| <p>2.1 It is very clear that the HELSINKI law needs to be revised to reflect current methods for conducting clinical research involving human subjects. There is a lot of research that does not directly involve medical personnel, making it awkward for physicians to serve as the leader of the studies they know little about, yet must take responsibility for the conduct of the research. Further, senior faculty researchers do not get credit for leading projects, when there is a requirement for a physician to serve as the lead, when physicians are not knowledgeable about the topic. This change will likely also require that the universities take on new responsibilities for Ethics reviews. We recommend that the government and the university leadership across the country begin a process of revising these rules that are hampering and distorting the excellent quality research being conducted by occupational therapists and other health professionals throughout Israel.</p> | <p>(D) We are actively interacting with the relevant government authorities to revise the Helsinki law, based on the current methods for conducting clinical research involving human subjects. This revision may solve practical difficulties raised when well-qualified researchers (such as our faculty members) who are not medical physicians lead a given research study and should retain both the responsibility as well as receive the appropriate credit for the maintenance of high quality studies.</p> <p>(U) We agree and share these concerns. Several researchers as well as the Research Authority are aware of these difficulties and several steps are being taken to resolve the problem.</p> |

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|---|--|
| <p>2.2 With few exceptions, doctoral and postdoctoral trainees in occupational therapy have very limited access to funds to support their graduate training. As a result, they must continue to work full time in practice while taking courses, obtaining mentoring, completing research and writing. As a result, students are hampered in productivity, time to completion and opportunities for collaboration. The government and the universities need to support doctoral students and post-doctoral fellows so they can concentrate on their research program of study. This strategy has the additional benefit of supporting academic faculty's research programs, and enables them to apply for more grants and publish more of their work.</p> | <p>(D) We definitely agree that the government and the universities should enhance the support given to doctoral students and post-doctoral fellows, which will also result in supporting academic faculty's research programs, and enhance the submission of grant applications and publications.</p> <p>(U) See response to Recommendation 5.2(b)</p> |
| <p>2.3 Criteria for promotion and tenure need to reflect standards appropriate for the field, such as publishing in influential journals in occupational therapy and related disciplines. It is important to create benchmarks appropriate for the field of study; impact factors based on biomedical science are not appropriate for applied research publications. Each University Promotion and Tenure Committee needs to create relevant benchmarks for occupational therapy faculty members.</p> | <p>(D) We agree that the University Promotion and Tenure Committee should refer to relevant benchmarks for occupational therapy faculty members as, for example, with regard to the impact factors of our journals (since some of our journals have low impact factors because we are a relatively small community); the sources of grants should be specifically considered. Promotions should also consider contributions of our staff members to theory and practice that focus on developing our discipline. This may include writing books and chapters in books; conference presentations as well as contribution to developing clinics and other OT services in the community.</p> <p>(U) See response to Recommendation 6.4.</p> |

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| 3. Teaching/ Learning | |
| <p>3.1 The occupational therapy faculty members in all three programs have extremely heavy teaching loads for research faculty when compared to universities in North America. We recommend that the appropriate governmental and university leadership set more acceptable standards for teaching loads, and that these standards include a mechanism for reducing teaching loads when research faculty have funding for projects that require the senior faculty's time to oversee and conduct the project. Because this is a professional program that requires a large number of content specific courses to meet occupational therapy minimum standards, courses cannot be removed for a period of time while faculty members work on a project. Furthermore, courses must have more multiple small groups, practical labs and competency checking when compared to other courses in the university, which also increases the time demands for teaching and evaluating students. We acknowledge that each University may need to set a specific plan that is consistent with their structure.</p> | <p>(D) As noted by the Committee, due to factors related to the fact that we run a "professional program that requires a large number of content specific courses to meet occupational therapy minimum standards", our faculty members indeed contend with a heavy teaching load that has a toll on their abilities to conduct integrative research in varying field or laboratory locations. We intend to urge the appropriate governmental bodies and the University administration to show greater recognition of this issue and provide more flexible standards for teaching loads.</p> <p>(U) See response to Recommendation 6.1.</p> |
| <p>3.2 In order to alleviate the burden of creating many elective courses at each university program, we recommend that the 3 programs consider the possibility of offering graduate coursework across all the universities using internet, web conferencing, or other distance means so students would not have to travel to each university. This would enable graduate students to get the best expert teaching a course, and would reduce overall teaching loads for graduate courses. Within this possibility, students would still sign up for their graduate work at their preferred university, with their preferred mentors, and courses would be co-listed across universities. Universities could also offer these courses for non-degree seeking clinicians as a source of revenue and to support better practice.</p> | <p>(D) We have already begun to discuss with the OT departments at Tel Aviv University and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem the possibility of building and offering collaborative graduate coursework using the Internet, web conferencing and other methods. However, we note that building such a system requires financial resources and additional personnel that have not been allocated to our Department.</p> |

| Committee's recommendations | University's (U) and Department's (D) responses |
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| <p>3.3 The three occupational therapy programs need to clearly differentiate the MS clinical/ [non-thesis] and MS thesis /PhD tracks. Currently the vast majority of graduate students take the thesis option because this keeps their options open to pursue a PhD later if they wish. Therefore, many students complete a thesis, which creates a much greater burden on supervising faculty, and only some of these students continue to the PhD. It is at the PhD level that faculty receive the most help to advance their research agenda so we recommend that the schools create a clear differentiation of the two master's degree options so that students who seek advanced clinical training and greater proficiency as a knowledge user to promote evidence based practice would pursue the non-thesis track, whereas those who intend to continue to the PhD would pursue the thesis track. Those pursuing the thesis option would obtain more credits for the thesis, and less credits for coursework, creating additional clarity about the difference between the 2 options.</p> | <p>(D) We accept the recommendation to clearly differentiate the MS clinical [non-thesis] and MS thesis/PhD tracks. A small committee of our staff members will convene to formulate a process to carry this out.</p> |
| <p>3.4 We recommend that the occupational therapy programs consider what it means that all students earn grades in a very narrow and high range. This practice does not differentiate performance among students, and perhaps reduces the possibilities for substantive feedback.</p> | <p>(D) With regard to the narrow and high range of course grades, we recognize that this makes it more "difficult to differentiate performance among students and provide substantive feedback". We note that the vast majority of our students enter our competitive programs with high grades and are highly motivated to continue their academic achievements during their studies. This, to some extent, accounts for their high achievements during their coursework. Nevertheless, we will exert a strong effort to distinguish between even small differences in performance and also continue to provide varied feedback (tests, papers, in-class presentation) to help our students improve still further.</p> |

| Committee's recommendations | University's (U) and Department's (D) responses |
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| <p>3.5 The occupational therapy faculty members are making strides to be connected with members of other disciplines, but location, resources and other factors are creating barriers to inter-professional education. There is a critical need for the government and the universities to prioritize inter-professional education and research by creating and supporting initiatives to house health disciplines in proximity to each other, and to fund inter-professional education, doctoral students and research projects that address inter-professional collaboration, the impact on learning and ultimately on health outcomes.</p> | <p>(D) We believe in inter-professional education and in its possible impact on learning and on health outcomes. We, therefore, support the recommendation to create priorities in inter-professional education and will seek resources and opportunities to advance it.</p> |
| <p>3.6 All departments indicated that they are having increasingly greater difficulty finding clinical placements for students. We recommend that the fieldwork leaders employ innovative and experimental strategies for providing supervision. For example, some settings are supervising 2 students with one therapist. The clinical preceptors are trying out methods that can be shared.</p> | <p>(D) The fieldwork leaders are very creative. They work together with a high level of cooperation but there are many financial and sociological barriers that hinder their efforts to find top-level clinical placements for students. Any help with this issue on the part of the governmental offices and the University administration will be appreciated. As noted by the Committee in Section 3.7, payment to clinical sites for supervising students may be one solution to this complex problem.</p> |
| <p>3.7 The Council for Higher Education needs to address the inequity of payment to clinical sites for supervising students. Currently, the developing programs in private colleges are paying as much as 4 times more for placement supervision, and so the public universities cannot compete. We recommend that the CHE require a set amount be paid for clinical site supervision as part of the accreditation process. Specifically, the universities have a limit on this remuneration; colleges need to be required to pay the same amount to equalize the process within the community.</p> | <p>This recommendation is rightfully in the purview of the CHE but concur completely with it.</p> |