

EQA EVALUATION OF PHYSICAL THERAPY AT BEN GURION UNIVERSITY OF THE
NEGEV

Responses to the IEC Report Recommendations of June 2021

Essential

1. Hire an additional minimum of 0.5 FTE administrative support staff (up to 1.0 FTE to more closely match other PT programs) within 1 year.

Steps toward implementation: There is an agreement between the Department and Faculty that additional administrative support (of 0.5 FTE) is essential for the good functioning of the Department of Physical Therapy. However, the Head of Faculty administration mentioned that University should provide the resources for this position. The Faculty will turn to BGU management with the request for an additional 0.5 FTE of administrative support.

BGU management response: At present, a department coordinator (1.0FTE) is supporting the Department's administrative tasks needs. Accounting for the number of students and Faculty in the Department this is within the ratio which is common in the University.

Time table: None.

2. If the program either remains a four-year BPT or moves to five-year Master's program, a formal process of program curriculum review must be undertaken to continue to consolidate and modernize the current curriculum. Outside reviewers, including alumni, clinical instructors, and outside experts must be included in the process. This formal review of the program curriculum should occur on a regular basis more often than the current 10- to 12-year review cycle of the CHE.

Steps toward implementation: The department staff agrees with reviewers that revision of the curriculum should be done regularly. Therefore, the Department is planning to form several committees to review the current curriculum in each major discipline (orthopedic, neurological, respiratory, pediatric rehabilitation, etc.).

Time table: Forthcoming academic year.

3. The committee feels that the Department should carefully re-evaluate this transition and query all potential stakeholders, consider finances, and make a decision that is not purely based on curriculum bloat. Further, with the expansion of the scope of practice, carefully evaluate additional material that reflects modern physical therapy for inclusion to the degree.

Steps toward implementation: The department staff will re-evaluate the MPTe program and will discuss with the university authorities the academic and financial ramifications of implementing this program.

Time table: Forthcoming academic year.

4. Hire 2 new faculty (in addition to the planned replacement for retiring Faculty) within the next 3 years to support the teaching and research missions of the Department.

Steps toward implementation: Parallel track members' teaching load is twice the regular track. Therefore although they are identified as 3.5 FTE, their overall contribution to teaching in the Department is in fact equivalent to 7 FTE in the regular track.

The Research track has been identified as having 3.5 FTE members, together with the equivalent of parallel members, the PT department has 10.5 teaching FTE.

At present, there are 164 undergraduate and 37 graduate students, a total of 201 students in the Department. According to the CHE financing scheme, in BGU, the ratio of students to Faculty should be approximately 22 students per Faculty. Accordingly, in the PT department, 9 teaching FTEs are required, a number which is, in fact, smaller than the teaching FTE the Department currently has.¹

Moreover, in accordance with the CHE scheme, the PT department may recruit 1.5 research FTE upon the retirement of 1.5 FTE in the parallel track. If opted, this will reinforce the research activity in the Department while maintaining the total of 9 teaching FTE for accomplishing the teaching duties in the Department.

Time table: In accordance with the planned retirement of the parallel track faculty. Note that recently a teacher retired, and we are planning to recruit a researcher.

¹ The program undergraduates are required to study 196 credit points in 4 years to complete their degree (in contrast, the common university wide practice is 160 credit points in 4 years). Nonetheless 30 credits in the PT program are clinical practice, exercise or seminars and hence the teaching load is not significantly different.

5. All of the above noted concerns must be addressed. As noted previously, the current plan to replace retiring teaching faculty with research faculty must be implemented, and the Rector should prioritize the hiring of 2 additional faculty members to enhance the teaching and research mission of the Department.

Steps toward implementation: In accordance with the CHE recommendation for Faculty to students ratio, the rector office supports the recruitment of 1.5 research FTE upon the retirement of 1.5 FTE in the parallel track, as it will maintain a total of 9 teaching FTE.

Time table: In accordance with the planned retirement of the parallel track faculty.

Important

1. The committee would like to see implementation of the Vice-Rector's plan to require each Department to submit structured reports as soon as possible. We would also like to see an effective follow-up process be put in place to assure remediation of identified deficits.

Steps toward implementation: Implementation is expected during the upcoming academic year. A copy of the report will be sent to the committee.

Time table: Oct. 2021 to July 2022

2. Consider bringing the students back to the University for a short semester during the fourth year that can be used for didactic learning of courses not critical for the affiliations. This may reduce some of the overload in the first 2 years of the program.

Steps toward implementation: This recommendation was discussed at the departmental staff meeting held in 2021. At the present stage, we are in the process of identifying two courses that can be taught as a concentrated week-long seminar. We will then be able to pilot the implementation of these courses during 4th year of BPT program. The results of the pilot will then be studied and evaluated on whether to continue with this program change or not.

Time table: The academic year 2022-2023

3. The Department and the School should consider redesigning the IPE experience for the PT student's later years with a patient centered focus in design.

Steps toward implementation: The IPE classes were canceled in recent years. Moreover, we agree with the committee that in a present form, they are not reaching the goal. In the last two years, there is an elective course (Active aging) that is designed to include an equal number of students from four departments: nursing, medicine, emergency medicine, and physical therapy. Students are divided into groups that include one representative of each profession and work together.

For the next academic year, we are planning to develop an additional elective course (Entrepreneurship) that will be constructed in the same way. In addition, we are planning to promote additional courses attended by students from different schools and departments of the Faculty of the health sciences and replace the canceled IPE course.

Time table: The academic year 2022-2023

4. BGU should carefully evaluate, assess, and set objectives toward utilizing progressive teaching and learning strategies in their instructional methods. This should include online learning, flipped classrooms, a repository of video support tools for class, and more problem-based methods of assessment.

Steps toward implementation: The Department+Faculty is encouraging advanced teaching methods and approaches. E.g., the new state-of-the-art Faculty simulation center (5000 Sq.me) will enable the Department to employ advanced teaching.

Time table: The academic year 2022-2023

5. Review and diversify learning experiences for the master students.

Steps toward implementation: There are currently a limited number of courses available for Master's Degree students, but the low number of students in our Master's program does not enable opening additional courses. Therefore, we are working in the direction suggested by the committee in that two years ago, we changed some of the courses from status “mandatory” to “elective”. This allowed students from other departments in the Faculty to take courses and diversify their options. In addition, we are planning to change our Master’s degree program from Masters in Physical Therapy to Masters in Rehabilitation Sciences. We hope that this will allow us to recruit more students and diversify the courses available for the students.

Time table: The academic year 2022-2023

6. Schedule Department meetings 2 x per year for the academic Faculty, clinical instructors, and adjunct Faculty to attend. This will facilitate discussion and interaction between all faculty members teaching the BPT and Master's students.

Steps toward implementation: Three years ago, we started a "tradition" of an extended staff meeting at the end of the academic year. We feel that these meetings are very important for the interaction between all Faculty and updated on the departmental life. We are ready, in accord with the committee's suggestion, to make these meetings twice a year, but an additional budget from the Faculty or University is needed. Director of the School of community health professions, Dr. Igal Plaht, Dean (Prof Angel Porgador), and Head of Faculty Administration, Mr. Herzel Zhan, agree that an additional budget for these meetings is needed and promised to provide additional resources.

Time table: Forthcoming academic year.

7. Peer evaluations may be helpful for Faculty. The Department should consider peer evaluations, to substantiate student evaluation findings and to provide additional assessment of teaching.

Steps toward implementation: Peer evaluation for faculty teaching is very challenging, especially in a department with a very small number of staff members with dozens of years of experience. However, we believe that peer evaluation can be a very useful tool that facilitates the growth and development of junior staff or staff with low students evaluation. We are planning to implement peer evaluation of junior staff as a pilot in the forthcoming year and regularly in case of success.

Time table: Forthcoming academic year.

8. Develop and implement yearly assessments of faculty performance for teaching, research, and service in the next year. This currently occurs on an informal basis. A scheduled yearly assessment, and review by the Head of the Department would provide Faculty with regular evaluation and feedback on performance to enable growth and development. This yearly evaluation would also measure whether the Faculty are aligned with programmatic mission and goals and whether they are on track for promotion and tenure.

Steps toward implementation: We agree with the committee, and the new Head of the Department (Dr. Ilan Kurz) is planning to start in the forthcoming year to schedule a yearly meeting with each core staff member to provide regular evaluation and feedback on performance and to discuss future plans for growth and development.

Time table: Forthcoming academic year.

9. Additional research space must be found to accommodate the research needs of any new faculty members hired.

Steps toward implementation: The School found a space dedicated to accommodating the research lab of a new staff member. In January 2022, all storage spaces from the Dichman building will be transferred to a new Faculty Simulation Building. Part of the vacated areas will be turned into research labs for the new staff members.

Time table: January 2022

Also, within the next year, a 1.0 FTE engineer position should be assigned to the Department.

Steps toward implementation: The position (1.0 FTE) of engineer for three out of four research labs in the Department was recently approved by the University. These days the recruitment process is close to the end, and in the following month, the engineer will start working.

Time table: October 2021.

Finally, the planned increase in University support for technical writing and statistical analysis should be made available to all faculty members within the next year.

Steps toward implementation: Prof. Norm O'Rourke agreed to cooperate with the Department researchers in the level of statistical knowledge as part of the Faculty "LEV" project. English editing – the Faculty established an agreement with a certified English editing company for a significantly reduced rate and published it to the Faculty researchers.

Time table: October 2021.

10. See Recommendations outlined above within the Research section above. In addition, an effort must be made to accommodate the space needs of the junior, adjunct, and new faculty members for their research

Steps toward implementation: To date, no space dedicated to accommodating the junior and adjunct staff is available. There is a shortage of space, and it will be difficult to find separate rooms for these purposes. However, we found three public spaces in the Deichman building (computer room), and the second space is the basement of the caroline building, which can serve the junior and adjunct staff for the rest and preparation for the teaching.

Time table: Immediately

Desired

1. The Department should work with the appropriate University officials to attempt to identify a biostatistician that can be assigned to the Department and provide consultative services to the PhD students.

Steps toward implementation: See the answer above (Section 9).

Time table: October 2021