

July 30, 2021

**Evaluation of Physical Therapy Department at Ariel University –
Final report**

Dear Prof. Binder-Macleod,

We thank you and the committee members for your thorough review of the PT program at Ariel University and for your insightful report. Below please find our response to your recommendations. Most of the recommendations will be adopted already in the 2021-22 academic year, and some will be implemented in the 2022-23 academic year.

Committee recommendation	Steps toward implementation (including timetable)
Essential	
1. Provide more administrative assistance by hiring an additional individual, bringing up the total to 2.6 individuals within 1 year.	The Ariel University HR will reassess the department's needs and reconsider hiring additional part-time administrative staff.
2. Create and measure yearly formal student learning outcomes to determine program performance.	A structured computerized questionnaire for assessing learning outcomes will be developed by the teaching committee at the beginning of the 2021-22 academic year. The teaching staff will be asked to complete the questionnaire at the end of each semester. The teaching committee will review the questionnaire and together with the teaching staff will implement adaptations and changes, as needed.
3. Develop and implement a formal curriculum assessment process (timing and structure) that is designed to evaluate the curriculum on a regular basis. Include stakeholders such as clinical instructors, faculty, and students. On a less frequent basis, an extensive review should take place that involves external reviewers and alumni to provide objective assessment of the curriculum.	The curriculum is constantly assessed by the teaching committee, the Head of the Department, the Dean, and the Rector. Additional actions for formal curriculum assessment will be implemented as follows: (1) The questionnaire mentioned above will be designed to address the curriculum as well. It should be noted that the teaching staff also includes the clinical training coordinator and several clinical instructors. Additionally, the clinical training coordinator is a member of the department teaching committee.

	<p>(2) Once in three years, starting from the 2021-22 academic year, we will arrange for a formal meeting between representatives of the department's teaching staff, the healthcare institutions, alumni, and external clinical instructors. This meeting will focus on discussing potential updates of the curriculum.</p>
<p>4. Reduce the number of credits required for completion of the bachelor program. Consolidate courses into larger themes (e.g., health promotion, professional practice, etc). This may help reduce the number of credits, improve integration of overall content, and reduce student and programmatic burden by reducing the number of syllabi, redundancy, and assessments. An external consultant (non-affiliated academician) may assist in this process to reduce the load and burden on the students without compromising the quality of the program.</p>	<p>Generally, we are subordinate to the Israeli Council for Higher Education's decisions regarding the number of credits in the Bachelor's degree program, and to the requirements of the Israeli Ministry of Health. We are therefore limited in our ability to perform major changes and expect the Council for Higher Education to re-evaluate the academic load and number of credits in all PT programs in Israel broadside. However, some local actions will be implemented:</p> <p>(1) For the next academic year (2021-22) the teaching staff will be asked to review their syllabi concerning the prerequisite courses and assessment methods, to reduce unnecessary assignments.</p> <p>(2) At the end of the first semester of the 2021-22 academic year, the teaching committee will discuss options to reduce redundancy and student burden in the Bachelor's degree program. Some courses will be consolidated (e.g., the PNF course will be integrated with the Therapeutic Exercises B course), and consequently, the overall course assignments will be reduced. These changes are expected to be implemented in the following academic year (2022-23).</p>
<p>5. The program must provide hands on experience for the BPT students prior to their fourth year of training. These experiences can include opportunities for integrated clinical experiences within external clinical healthcare systems and providers. Expanding the physiotherapy clinic on campus to include adult patients with</p>	<p>This issue is planned to be addressed at the beginning of the next (2021-22) academic year. The following topics will be promoted:</p> <p>(1) Engagement of our students in the Ariel community, in the framework of practical academic courses (e.g., group instruction and ADL courses in the second year).</p>

<p>musculoskeletal and neurological conditions may offer an opportunity to engage in clinical practice in the earlier years.</p>	<p>(2) As suggested, we intend to expand the musculoskeletal and neurological physiotherapy clinics in our medical center that is planned to begin operating on campus during 2022. These clinics will serve us to expand hands-on experiences for our BPT students in the first and second years.</p>
<p>Important</p>	
<p>1. Re-evaluate the goals of the master program, specifically the non-thesis track, and provide a decision in 3 years whether to continue with a non-thesis track. If the decision is to continue, more elective courses must be made available to the students.</p>	<p>The vast majority of our Master's degree students study in the thesis track. However, as part of our goals to promote clinical excellence, we offer an opportunity for PTs who prefer to expand their knowledge at the Master's level in the framework of the non-thesis track. Accordingly, beginning from the current academic year (2020-1), the curriculum of the Master's degree program includes more courses reflecting contemporary clinical practice (e.g., Red Flags course). We intend to further re-evaluate the goals of the Master's program, with a specific focus on the non-thesis track.</p>
<p>2. The review committee supports the desire of the Department to establish its own PhD program.</p>	<p>This issue is currently being addressed at the University management level in collaboration with the Israeli Council for Higher Education.</p>
<p>3. Maintain the goal to recruit 3-4 more faculty. However, rather than hiring additional faculty that cover a wide range of clinical and research areas (as is currently planned), consider either building on current strengths or pursue a cluster hire in a particular area of high potential impact. Also consider hiring underrepresented minorities to improve diversity in the faculty.</p>	<p>At the beginning of the 2021-22 academic year we intend to formulate the department's 5-year strategic plan, including profiling of the faculty members we are interested in recruiting. We plan to publish a call for proposals at the end of 2022 accordingly.</p>
<p>4. Develop and implement yearly assessments of faculty performance for teaching, research, and service. 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</p>	<p>The Head of the Department will perform a yearly assessment for each faculty member, based on a formal structured feedback, as of the end of the next (2021-22) academic year.</p>

and goals, and whether they are on track for promotion and tenure within the college.	
5. The University should consider hiring a technician / engineer to support and maintain the laboratory equipment within the Department.	Currently, a part-time technician is available to support the scientific needs of the Health Sciences faculty. Following the transition of three faculty members to their new laboratories, we will re-evaluate the needs and act accordingly. This is expected to be performed by the end of the next (2021-22) academic year.
6. Continue to prioritize contiguous spaces in one or two nearby buildings for teaching and research.	By the beginning of the next (2021-22) academic year, the 5 laboratories of our department are expected to be located in the same building. Teaching will be conducted in another building located nearby.
7. The Department needs to provide shared office space for clinical faculty who teach part time in the Department	A shared office for faculty who teach part-time will be provided at the beginning of the next (2021-22) academic year in our teaching building.
Desirable	
1. Implement a formal system of peer evaluation that evaluates the teaching effectiveness, rigor, and appropriateness of course content.	<p>The following actions will be conducted from the next (2021-22) academic year:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Evaluation of the aforementioned structured questionnaires by the teaching committee and the Head of the Department at the end of each semester. (2) Evaluation of the aforementioned meeting between representatives from the department's teaching staff, healthcare institutions, alumni, and external clinical instructors. <p>These actions will be added to other actions that are already being carried out:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Evaluation of a semestrial report of students' grades for each course by the Head of the Department. (2) Evaluation of semestrial evaluation reports on the lecturers and courses by the Head of Department. (3) Evaluation of oral feedback from student representatives in a personal meeting with the Head of the Department at the end of each semester.

<p>2. Explore pipeline programs to increase interests in the BPT program for highschool Arab students who could meet the initial criteria for program entry.</p>	<p>We intend to allow up to 10% exceptions of minority populations that do not meet the admission criteria to the BPT program for the 2022-23 academic year, and to develop a mentoring program to support these students. The admissions committee will design an operational plan to reach high school students in minority communities as well as in peripheral locations in Israel.</p>
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Sincerely,



Ofira Einstein, B.P.T, Ph.D

Head of Physical Department