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To:

Mr. Yarden Biyalistok

Quality Assessment

The Council for Higher Education (CHE)

Zefat Academic College's Responses to the International Evaluation Report of the Committee for Quality Assessment in the Field of Physiotherapy

First of all, we gratefully appreciate the committee members' constructive comments on the self-evaluation process. Secondly, the college management as well as the departmental faculty members endeavor to implement the committee's recommendations in order to continue their work towards professional development, as well as in order to reach the international academic arena.

1. Essential

Committee recommendation	Steps toward implementation (including timetable)
1. Create formal programmatic assessment and measure the attainment of the program's goals and of the students' learning objectives on an ongoing basis.	We intend to develop forms and tools, which will enable us to assess and/or measure the program's goals and the students' learning objectives based on the guidelines of "Outcomes Assessment in Physical Therapy Education" (Haessig & Potin, 2002), adapted by the CHE and the college policy. These criteria may include three primary areas: students, graduates and faculty. The departmental council and the departmental teaching committee are scheduled to meet in November 2021 to discuss the relevant criteria, which should be ready within six months to one year.
2. Develop a formal on-going curriculum assessment process that is designed to evaluate the curriculum on a regular basis.	We plan to produce a form that will evaluate the program's curriculum based on the study of Charlene Nelson (<i>Physical Therapy</i> , Volume 51, Issue 12, December 1971, pp. 1307–1313), adapted by the CHE guidelines. The department Head and the department teaching committee will be responsible for this process, which will be ready within the coming year.
3. Re-evaluate the faculty's current online teaching strategies and techniques.	As the curriculum will include 30% digital teaching after COVID-19, the college's

<p>Carefully assess the quality of the experience. Increase training for remote learning by leveraging resources in the College or external to the College. Re-employ new strategies for the planned 30% of teaching material (online) that is expected to be retained after COVID.</p>	<p>teaching committee is planning to create specific strategies for utilizing and assessing effective tools for higher academic education. Moreover, the departmental teaching committee will discuss these strategies, adapted to the needs of physical therapy students and based on the recommendations of the study of Ødegaard et al. 2021 (<i>BMC Medical Education</i>, https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-020-02483-w). This process will be implemented within the coming year.</p>
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2. Important

Committee recommendation	Steps toward implementation (including timetable)
<p>1. Develop a process to enable the faculty to have input on the appointment of the Head of the Department</p>	<p>The department Head is appointed according to college procedures, which define the department Head's position, including his/her responsibility and authority, areas of expertise, term of office, qualifications and position prerequisites. The college management will consider the possibility of affording the faculty some input on this appointment process through peer assessment.</p>
<p>2. If the Department increases in faculty size, then there may be a need for more administrative support.</p>	<p>The size of the departmental secretarial office is currently adjusted by the number of students, inherently limited by the CHE. Once the department will increase its faculty size (e.g., by opening the non-thesis M.P.T. course), we absolutely intend to add more administrative support accordingly.</p>
<p>3. Explore the creation of a Physical Therapy clinic in the new building. This will provide close proximity to the academic unit for clinical training for additional clinical placements and for the development of research collaborations for faculty.</p>	<p>The department will examine such existing models in other academic institutions in Israel. In addition, we will examine the implementation of such a program with health care services in the North. Then, we will present the program outline for discussion with all the college's stakeholders (e.g., President, Vice President, Board of Directors) to evaluate its academic and economic feasibility.</p>
<p>4. The department should make a concerted effort to incorporate methods of serving the Northern aspect of Israel within their curriculum and this can be accomplished in several ways.</p>	<p>The department strives to implement and integrate the serving of the Northern population of Northern Israel, within the curriculum, as follows: 4.1 The department has recently planned collaboration with the "Health Galilee Cluster",</p>

	<p>in order to enable our students to be involved in community projects for the Northern population. The first step of this project will be applied in two courses: "Geriatrics & Gerontology" and "Rehabilitation in the community" (academic year 2021-2022).</p> <p>4.2 Increasing the number of Arab students is addressed in detail in section 16.</p> <p>4.3 The departmental council and departmental teaching committee will review the curriculum in order to perform further reductions in the number of credits and to prepare new elective courses (e.g., health promotion, nutrition), which could address the special healthcare needs of the Northern population. This will be implemented within the next 2-3 years.</p> <p>4.4 The department usually offers a postgraduate course for qualifying clinical instructors in the North. So far, six such courses have been held (2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2018 and 2020). On July 14th, 2021, the department organized a conference for its clinical instructors in physical therapy. We also plan to organize regular professional conferences and post-graduate courses for the physical therapy community in the North.</p>
<p>5. Incorporate the IPE experiences with the health “city” vision. Incorporate “patient centered” (e.g., working collaboratively on a patient case) IPE, using individuals from the Medical School or Ziv hospital to provide the professional, medical component.</p>	<p>The college has previously (4-5 years ago) conducted a pilot to examine the IPE at Ziv Hospital Center, under the supervision of senior doctors (e.g. Dr. Osama Hussein – Head of department). At this meeting, patients in the Internal Medicine department, interacted with physiotherapy students, nursing students, medicine and social work students, who were all practicing patient care. One of the pilot's main conclusions was that students were unaware of what the other professions were working on. For instance, medical students were unaware of the role of social workers in patient care during hospitalization. The college is interested in continuing this type of patient-centered learning, utilizing its new medical simulation center.</p>
<p>6. As non-thesis programs in other universities do not seem to attract many potential students, we suggest an initial needs-assessment survey.</p>	<p>The department will conduct a survey among our alumni and other physical therapists in the north of Israel, in order to evaluate the need for such a non- thesis program in the North (this will be ready within the next 6-12 months).</p>

<p>7. The Department should add at least one additional full time PhD trained faculty before opening such a program.</p>	<p>An additional full-time senior faculty member with a PhD in physical therapy will be recruited upon the opening of the non-thesis M.P.T. program.</p>
<p>8. The department 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.</p>	<p>As we have mentioned above, the departmental teaching committee will discuss and consider utilizing progressive teaching and learning strategies, based on the study of Ødegaard et al. 2021, adapted to the policy and infrastructure of the college. We believe that this process will start during the next academic year.</p>
<p>9. Review with clinical instructors serving all programs the effects of introducing pediatric affiliation as a first affiliation on the student's performance, learning, and ability to work in pediatric care at graduation.</p>	<p>We intend to assess this issue with the clinical instructors in the next pediatric placement (in the 2021-2022 academic year). Furthermore, it should be noted that the 'Atypical child development' course has a practical exam, besides the theoretical test (in contrary to other departments that only have a theoretical exam). Moreover, the faculty members who are responsible for the pediatrics courses, utilize progressive teaching tools, such as video podcasting and ICF or clinical reasoning assessment forms in order to improve students' cognitive and psychomotor skills.</p>
<p>10. Increase the number of the department's faculty members with > 80% effort within the Department to at least 6.</p>	<p>The college management will strive to increase the faculty members with > 80% of full-time positions in the department to six. This will be carried out during the next three years.</p>
<p>11. Develop mentoring strategies, to facilitate the development of faculty for rank promotion.</p>	<p>As we have mentioned in the previous self-evaluation report, the criteria for faculty promotion in the regular track are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The highest academic degree that has been completed and approved (e.g., MA, PhD). Research activity (number, type of publications, quality and ranking according to international citation indices). Studies and research reports, submission and receipt of external research grants. Active participation in regional, national and international conferences. Teaching (scope, quality, feedback, peer review). Contribution to the college and to the community.

	<p>Once in every quarter, the Head of the department will mentor the candidates for future promotion in order to examine their compliance with the criteria, and advise regarding what she/he lacks and what can be improved. One of the strategies is to make use of a case study, helping the faculty member to prepare a clinical presentation and/or a paper for publication.</p> <p>In addition, the department's teaching committee will propose ways for improving and upgrading teaching and clinical presentations for lecturers whose course feedback was mediocre and below.</p>
12. Develop a strategy for incorporating feedback from multiple sources beyond just student assessments. Consider input from the teaching committee and peer evaluations, to facilitate a comprehensive assessment of teaching.	Teaching evaluation is not based solely on student feedbacks. It is also dependent on peer faculty-members' evaluation (Physical Therapy department or other college departments). We are planning to consider input from teaching committee members in this assessment. This process will be initiated during the next academic year.
13. Develop and implement yearly assessments of faculty performance for teaching, research, and service. 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.	The departmental council will develop formal criteria for the assessment of faculty performance (teaching, research and service). The Head of the department will utilize this form annually for the general evaluation and feedback of each faculty member. These criteria will be ready during the next academic year.
14. Increase the financial support for the development of research within the Department by creating an appropriate pool of funds that can be used by PT faculty members to develop their research programs. These funds could be managed by the Department head and allocated yearly.	According to college procedures and the agreement with Planning and Budgeting Committee of the CHE, each senior (full-time) lecturer receives an annual research budget of \$8,000. This budget can be utilized to fund research activities and to support travelling to and attendance of international conferences.
15. Develop a strategic plan for research in the Department that considers the facilities available for research, strengths of the present faculty and future hires.	In the next academic year, we intend to develop a basic research strategy adapted to the facilities and the infrastructure of the department. The coordinator of research activities will lead and participate in this process. Moreover, few of the faculty members have recently published an article of a novel research, which was performed during the COVID-19 breakout, and was based on a questionnaire related to the prevalence of

	LBP among physiotherapy students (Abbas J, et al, 2021; https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2021.1953505).
16. Consider using scholarly work other than research (e.g., dissemination of knowledge to the PT community at large) as a metric for promotion.	As mentioned above (section no. 11), there are clear criteria for faculty promotion. Community service by candidates for promotion is assessed, as well.
17. Create an admissions strategy that is more holistic, is not solely dependent on psychometric results, but includes other elements as well (e.g., student experiences, prior employment, etc.). It may be beneficial to coincide admissions strategies with diversity initiatives as well, which appears to be reflective of the mission of the college. Thus, explore initiatives to generate interest in the profession of physical therapy among Arab high school students who could meet the initial criteria for program entry.	The college is aware of the lack of Arab students in the department and is planning strategies to address this issue: a. The college is considering a 10% Presidential 'student track' for candidates who do not meet the admission criteria. b. In order to expose the department to the Arab society, three Arab faculty members have recently participated in virtual meetings (December 2020, through the college youth academic center), with Arab middle school students. They talked about their experiences in academia and the process they had gone through until they obtained their academic positions. c. We intend to market our program in Arab high schools in the Galilee and meet students who have expressed an interest in studying health professions (academic year 2021-2022). d. We will utilize the medical simulation center in order to implement external assessment tests for those who do not meet the admission criteria. This process will continue in the upcoming academic year.

3. Desirable

Committee recommendation	Steps toward implementation (including timetable)
1. Identify for the CHE and on the Department's website the unique contributions that the program is making to healthcare in northern Israel. For example, identify the number or percentage of Zefat graduates who work in northern Israel, or identify the unique aspects of the curriculum compared to other PT programs in Israel, which are geared toward the population of northern Israel.	We will portray on the departmental website and for the CHE, the unique contributions of our program to healthcare in Northern Israel. This will be done in the next few academic years.

2. Consider incorporating a formal student association within the college with representatives from each of the departments.

The college will consider the incorporation of a formal student association during the next two years. For the time being, we have a 'student representative' in each class, who communicates the needs and/or demands of the students on various issues (academic, social, personal, etc.) to the class coordinators. The department Head (based on the reports of class coordinators) is responsible for providing expeditious response and for involving the college administration if/when needed.

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Vice President for Academic Affairs

Zefat Academic College