



# EVALUATION OF PHYSICAL THERAPY AT TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY

COMMITTEE FOR THE EVALUATION OF PHYSICAL THERAPY  
DEPARTMENTS IN ISRAEL

## Section 1: Background and Procedures

- 1.1 In the academic year 2019-20 the Council for Higher Education [CHE] put in place arrangements for the evaluation of study programmes in the field of Physical therapy sciences in Israel.
- 1.2 The Higher Education Institutions [HEIs] participating in the evaluation process were:
  - Ariel University
  - Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
  - Tel Aviv University
  - Zefat Academic College
  - University of Haifa
- 1.3 To undertake the evaluation, the Vice Chair of the CHE appointed a Committee consisting of<sup>1</sup>:
  - 1.3.1 **Prof. Stuart Binder-Macleod**- Edward L. Ratledge Professor Emeritus, Department of Physical Therapy University of Delaware, USA-Committee Chair
  - 1.3.2 **Prof. Lori Michener**-Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy University of Southern California, USA
  - 1.3.3 **Prof. Yocheved (Yochy) Laufer**- (EMERITUS), Department of Physical therapy, University of Haifa, Israel.
  - 1.3.4 **Prof. Chad E. Cook**- Division of Physical Therapy, Department of Orthopedics, Duke University, USA

Ms. Alex Buslovich Bilik and Mr. Yarden Bialistok Cohen served as the Coordinators of the Committee on behalf of the CHE.
- 1.4 The evaluation process was conducted in accordance with the CHE's Guidelines for Self-Evaluation (Feb, 2019). Within this framework the evaluation committee was required to:
  - examine the self-evaluation reports submitted by the institutions that provide study programs in Physical Therapy
  - Conduct virtual site visits at 5 institutions participating in the evaluation process.
  - submit to the CHE an individual report on each of the academic units and study programs participating in the evaluation
  - set out the committee's findings and recommendations for each study program

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<sup>1</sup> The committee's letter of appointment is attached as **Appendix 1**.

- submit to the CHE a general report regarding the evaluated field of study within the Israeli system of higher education
- 1.5** The evaluation committee examined only the evidence provided by each participating institution — considering this alongside the distinctive mission set out by each institution in terms of its own aims and objectives. This material was further elaborated and explained in discussions with senior management, faculty members, students and alumni during the course of each one-day visit to each of the institutions.
- 1.6** This report deals with the **Department of Physical Therapy in the School of Health Professions of the Faculty of Medicine at Tel Aviv University**. The Committee's visit to **Tel Aviv University (via Zoom)** took place on **February 7-8, 2021**. The schedule of the visit is attached as **Appendix 2**.

## **Section 2: Executive Summary**

The external committee members take our roles and responsibilities seriously. We have made recommendations aimed at improving the faculty and student experience during the educational process. Consequently, all suggestions are made in good faith and are endorsed by the committee as a whole. We truly appreciate the opportunity to provide this feedback and consider it an honor. We have divided our recommendations as 1) essential, 2) important and desired. We wholeheartedly support the recommended essential changes within the executive summary that are outlined each below. The body of the document contains further explanation for our recommendations.

Overall the BPT and MScPT programs appear to comprehensively cover the essentials for training physical therapy professionals. The Department also sponsors PhD students in the PhD program run by the School of Graduate Studies. The level of research productivity and science is high.

The focus of the *essential recommendations* are in 2 broad categories: culture of assessment and the leadership. There is limited on-going and systematic review of the curriculum, student learning outcomes, or faculty. The self-evaluation provided very limited information about the quality assessment processes, reflection and analysis. Beyond that, the report was poorly prepared, missing information, and had many inconsistencies. A new self-evaluation report is required for the CHE. The Department needs to develop and implement processes for formal and regular assessments. A formal structure assures that educational needs are being met, curriculum remains comprehensive and current, faculty are continually developing across all domains of their workload profile, and ensuring students are achieving established learning outcomes. Specific updates to the curriculum and students learning include interprofessional education available to all students and professional behaviors outcomes are needed. Regarding structure, the head of a

physical therapy program needs to be a physical therapist. Change in the university and departmental organizational structure is needed to facilitate autonomy in Department management, hiring, and budgetary process.

*Secondary Recommendations*, classified as important or desirable fall into 3 focus areas: 1) education, 2) faculty and resources, and 3) facilities. Starting with facilities, a unified space for teaching and research is needed to drive excellence and translation of evidence to practice. For faculty and resources, multiple areas of improvement would enhance assessment of faculty teaching, learning and student outcomes and define faculty workloads to enhance success for promotion and tenure. Integration of all faculty in the assessment of the program and student outcomes via regular meetings and a culture of assessment is needed. This is especially critical given the large number of adjunct and clinical faculty. The third major area of education involves multiple aspects. Assessment of the relatively high dropout rates to determine reasons and remedies, adopting new and innovative approaches to teaching and learning across the multiple programs. Consideration of seminars on line (PhD and MS), flipped classroom, modernizing the curriculum and methods to improve student burden are some key recommendations. To capitalize and improve the research infrastructure and productivity, consider increasing funding for PhD students, more support staff to facilitate grant acquisition and post-award management. Also, consider the development of initiatives to recruit minority populations to the BPT program to reflect the Israel population. Initiatives are also needed to recruit PTs who are interested in research and faculty positions to improve both numbers of those pursuing advanced degrees as well as diversity in the PT faculty and students.

*Note:* The committee has requested clarifications regarding the report and more information after the review committee visit. Multiple queries were sent to the Department of Physical Therapy at Tel Aviv University. As of the writing of this report on 6 April 2021, no further information was received.

*Update:* The committee would like to clarify the timeline of writing of the report, and responses received. On 4 March 2021, we requested information for clarification and expansion of the document. Reminders were sent, but responses were not received by the time we completed our review on 6 April 2021. The responses to our questions were received on 27 April 2021, and distributed to the committee on 2 May 2021. Although some of the responses addressed the committee's questions, overall the responses were inadequate. The response document was generally disappointing. Final disposition of the committee in response to the response document: Based on the responses received, the committee believes that no edits to the final report are warranted.

## **Section 3: Observations**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The mission statement of the Department of Physical Therapy at Tel Aviv University (TAU) reflects a dedication to excellence in education and research, and outlines the following aims:

- To provide students with physical therapy education on the highest level;
- To meet healthcare consumer needs in physical therapy with excellent BPT and MScPT programs;
- To promote clinical and theoretical research in the field in order to provide evidence for basic theoretical and clinical knowledge, and to achieve optimal functional results.

The TAU Department of Physical Therapy mission is based on values of professional leadership, student centeredness, integration of clinical and personal skills, lifelong learning, the pursuance of academic excellence, intellectual development, the science of discovery, and the use of evidence-based practice. During our visit, we felt that the majority of these values were echoed by the faculty and students, specifically in the areas of the science of discovery, the blending of theory and clinical knowledge, intellectual development, and evidence-based practice.

### **3.2 Management and Administration**

The organizational structure of the Department of Physical Therapy is clearly described in the self-evaluation documents. The Department of Physical Therapy is housed within the School of Health Professions, which is within the Faculty of Medicine. The Department of Physical Therapy has 2 programs; the BScPT program, and a Master's of Science (MScPT) program with 2 tracks: a non-thesis and thesis. The self-evaluation was performed for the BScPT and MScPT programs. The Department of Physical Therapy also sponsors students in the PhD program, which is under the direct supervision of the School of Graduate Studies. There is a large body of students across the two Departmental programs. In the academic year 2018/2019, there were 341 students in the BScPT program, 66 students in the MScPT program, and sponsorship of 8 PhD students. Of note, updated tables were provided in February 2021, however numbers of students were not provided for 2019/2020 academic year.

The Chairperson of the Department of Physical Therapy is elected by the faculty for a 5-year term. The Chairperson serves as the Director of the BSPT program. The organizational structure does not require that a physical therapist be the head of the physical therapy program. The committee found this to be an unusual situation and views this as a weakness of the TAU physical therapy program. Similarly, the head of MScPT program, which primarily has research focus, is not a physical therapist. Thus, there are no physical therapists in a director role within a Department of Physical Therapy. Physical therapy is a professional degree, one with regulations and requirements that are specific to the degree that require intimate knowledge as a

professional to direct the curriculum. The Department Administrator is a physical therapist; however, they function as an administrative assistant only.

**Recommendation (Essential):** The Head of the BScPT program should be a physical therapist. If the Department Chairperson is a licensed physical therapist, then the Head of the Physical Therapy program could also be the Department Chairperson.

The faculty in the Department of Physical Therapy has a large cadre of part-time (less than 100% load) and clinical faculty within the Clinical teaching units at Tel-Hashomer Hospital and the Assaf HalRofeh Hospital. The interviews and report suggest a strong connection and communication between the 2 clinical teaching units and the University.

The 2019/2020 updated self-evaluation indicates there are 9 (8.25 FTE) full-time Senior academic faculty members, 7 are licensed physical therapists. A 10th faculty member was recently hired, who was selected by the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, and is not a physical therapist. With this recent hire, 70% of the senior academic faculty (7/10) are physical therapists. The committee is concerned that this trend of not hiring physical therapists to fill vacant research faculty positions will continue and believe that this is not in the best interest of the students being trained or the profession of physical therapy.

**Recommendation (Essential):** Develop a Department policy that indicates a percentage of physical therapists required to maintain in the Department. This will provide for greater autonomy for filling faculty positions, to ensure proper balance of clinical, teaching, and research expertise is maintained within the Department.

The resources, facilities, funding, structure, and support is dictated by the Faculty of Medicine organizational structure. The current administrative structure is not optimal. The Department of Physical Therapy should be in its own School with a newly formed Faculty of Health Professions. This would allow the Department to have greater autonomy and potential for independent growth and development. However, safeguards need to be put in place to make sure that the academic/research productivity is not compromised by such a change.

**Recommendation (Important):** The Department of Physical Therapy should be its own School (School of Physical Therapy), within a newly formed Faculty of Health Professions.

***In this area of evaluation, the Committee determined that Tel Aviv University meets the acceptable threshold level of performance.***

### **3.3 QA & Self-Evaluation Process**

It is the consensus of the review team that the report submitted was disassociated, poorly organized, missing key information, had a number of reported inconsistencies, and was very difficult to follow. There was an over reliance on the use of appendix materials, by not stating the facts in the report and then directing the reviewers to the appendices for more detail. Moreover, the appendices were not labeled for specific

content. This resulted in an over-burden to the review panel. Unfortunately, several Appendices were mislabeled (i.e., the document refers to Appendix 3, when the cited information is actually in Appendix 5) or missing. One example of a particularly troubling omission appears on page 16 of the report. The instructions for section 3.6 state that the report should include “*in a format of a table, address the recommendations of the previous evaluation committee and describe the implementation and follow-up process.*” The report simply told the reader to “Please see Appendix 3 Table 5.” Unfortunately, there is no Table 5 in Appendix 3. Furthermore, a search of all of the tables in Appendix 5 did not find any table that included the requested information. It also would have been helpful if the tables within the Appendices were labelled briefly describing the content of each table. Another major concern with the self-evaluation report is the lack of any description of the ongoing institutional or departmental processes involved in quality assurance and self-evaluation. Neither the Executive Summary (Section 1.1 to 1.3) nor the Internal Quality Assurance component (Sections 3.1 to 3.4) provided any information related to the processes undertaken or the findings identified and addressed related to the important process of self-evaluation of the Department’s programs. The responses provided do not address the instructions provided by the CHE and ramble on in a generally incoherent and disjointed manner. Unfortunately, the report confuses the important processes of Quality Assurance and self-evaluation with student course evaluations (see Section 3.1 to 3.4). This is very disappointing and frustrating.

Lastly and perhaps most importantly, the self-evaluation report presented a lot of information, but there was *not a lot of self-reflection and analysis of the program*. Self-evaluation reports are designed to critically examine a department's structure and substance, judge its overall effectiveness relative to its goals and learning domains, identify specific strengths and deficiencies, and indicate a plan for necessary modifications and improvements. The process should include an assessment of the appropriateness of program goals and learning domains to the demonstrated needs and expectations of the stakeholders of the program, and the program’s effectiveness in meeting set thresholds for established outcomes. This was not done in the report.

**Recommendation (Essential):** An organized and self-reflective self-evaluation report is needed. Hence, a new self-evaluation needs to be submitted. The report should be reviewed and proofread for flow, presentation, accuracy, and completeness. The report must demonstrate self-reflection and analysis were used to identify what is needed to improve the program. A review of the prior CHE conducted evaluation, recommendations, implementation and outcomes of changes based is needed. This is essential for the evaluation of the physical therapy program.

The self-evaluation and interviews with faculty described an unestablished mechanism for continual review. Concerns about the BPT program are reviewed 2 to 4 times per year by the Department’s Teaching Committee. However, it is unclear how the decisions of the teaching committee are enforced or if the desired outcomes are achieved. It was reported that no formal process for using student teaching evaluations for self-reflection or needed teaching or curricular changes, because only a small number of students take the time to complete the evaluations. There appears

to be no formal assessment process for evaluating teaching at the main campus or at the two campuses outside the main university beyond the student evaluations. It was noted student feedback is gathered informally throughout the year and that students are part of the Teaching Committee's reviews. Major reviews of the overall curriculum appear to only be conducted approximately every 10 years via the CHE process. Other than this once a decade review of the curriculum, there is no ongoing formal evaluation of the overall curriculum (versus ongoing changes within individual courses). There is a lack of a culture of assessment, reflection, and process for change. A formal review process is needed with definitive timeframes for a regular assessment of the curriculum, thus limiting consistent methods to refine educational needs. A formal structure is needed to assure that educational needs are met and that the curriculum remains comprehensive and modern.

**Recommendations (Essential):** The Department must develop and implement an effective formal process for curriculum review of the BScPT and MScPT programs within 1 year. The process must be clearly documented, and the results of at least the first round of self-evaluation must be presented to the CHE using the format outlined within the instructions for completing components 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4 of the present self-evaluation report. The committee membership for formal assessment should include stakeholders of faculty with broad representation across the BScPT program (including adjuncts), current students, and clinical instructors. 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 program does not appear to have a culture of formal program and student learning outcomes and assessment. This includes a lack of formal program outcomes that are tied to the mission of the department. This also includes a lack of student learning outcomes, which are the benchmarks of student performance and are the framework of program outcomes. By definition, student learning outcomes are the comprehensive performance metrics of students (e.g., licensure pass rates, test scores, progress within the program, student experience, OSCE scores, and other markers of learning in the program). This lack of a culture of assessment can inhibit the ability to oversee the formal and informal aspects of learning *within* the program. Student licensure as the sole program outcome is very limiting. The licensure results are heavily skewed toward each student passing, are likely reflective of minimal performance and do not distinguish the quality of the educational experience.

**Recommendations (Essential):** Create and measure yearly formal student learning outcomes to determine program performance.

***In this area of evaluation, the Committee determined that Tel Aviv University clearly fails to meet the acceptable threshold level of performance.***

### **3.4 Study programs**

#### **BPT Program**



Overall the program seems comprehensive, covering the essentials needed for educating professional physical therapy, including a sound understanding of the basic science of PT, the clinical skills required, and the clinical affiliations hours determined by the WCPT as the minimum necessary for licensure. Students express satisfaction with the program finding it interesting and challenging. While the faculty members at TAU are research oriented and are selected and promoted primarily on the basis of their research performance, overall the professional faculty at the Hospital based schools, and the clinical instructors during the clinical affiliations provide a well-rounded education and good role models for excellence in physical therapy practice. Based on our own calculations, (information was not directly provided), the program consists of 226.5 credits. Time in class is estimated at ~ 30-40 hours per week over the 4 years. These credits are somewhat higher than other Israeli programs. There appears to be overlap of some content, and concerns that some material is unnecessarily repetitive and could be revised or removed (via discussion with clinical instructors and students). Moreover, continued improvements are needed to increase the modern material included in the curriculum. There do not seem to have been significant changes in the curriculum over the last decade. The study program is still overloaded in terms of number of credit hours and final exams. Students note as many as 13 exams at the end of the semester. Course content seems often to be fragmented (e.g. 7 courses in orthopedic and sport rehab), which increases the number of final exams, and perhaps also creates redundancy. Some courses seem to reflect availability of lecturers and not necessarily curriculum needs. Work is needed to systematically evaluate the program to reduce the number of credits and/or decompress the hours for the credits required.

**Recommendation (Essential):** A formal process of program curriculum review must be undertaken to continue to consolidate and modernize the current curriculum. A recommendation is provided in the QA & Self-Evaluation process. The formal process of curricular review outline in 3.3 should be used to aid in reducing the number of credits and/or student workload to a more acceptable level. Consider reducing the number of courses and avoid redundancies between courses. Also consider coordinating the number of exams and assignments during and at the end of each semester to ensure a balanced workload across the program. The use of both an internal and external review panel should be used for this formal process. This formal review of the program curriculum should occur on a regular basis more often than the current 10-12-year review cycle of the CHE.

There appears to be a high dropout rate of students within the BPT program. The report indicates (Table 6-v, Tables New 2019-2020) there is an average 20% dropout for the last 5 cohorts admitted to the BPT program. Other Israel programs range from 2 - 15% dropout. Assessment of potential modifiable factors related to this relatively high dropout rate is needed. Consider investigating if a lack understanding of the rigor of the program, the nature of contemporary practice of physical therapy in Israel, and/or lack of observation hours prior to admittance to understand the profession of physical therapy contributed to the student drop out.

**Recommendation (Important):** Develop a process to determine why the drop-out rate is high, significantly higher than other Israel programs. Evaluate the uncovered reasons and plan for remedy of those modifiable factors.

It was difficult to discern the academic positions of the 75 'faculty members' listed, in large part due to the poorly constructed report. It appears that much of the clinical courses are delivered by physical therapists at the hospital-based school. However, it also appears that many courses are delivered by adjunct faculty who teach 1-2 courses and seem uninvolved with the department's mission and integrated in the faculty for decision-making about the courses and curriculum.

**Recommendation (Important):** Develop a mechanism for integrating all teaching faculty in the department in order to develop a more cohesive study program. Consider holding 2-4 faculty meetings per year, and invite all faculty to facilitate self-evaluation and discussion regarding the programs in the Department of Physical Therapy.

The Head of School outlined the many interprofessional education experiences available to BPT students. The primary mechanism described was an interdisciplinary Problem Based Learning (PBL) course which is available only to few (10) BPT students. These opportunities are not required or available to all BPT students.

**Recommendation (Essential):** Make the interprofessional PBL available to all students. Consider other methods to involve students in interprofessional learning experiences.

Generic characteristics, also referred to as professional behaviors, are a core element of a professional program. These include attributes such as accountability, altruism, professionalism, stress management, commitment to learning, and compassion/caring. Student embodiment of these characteristics are important both in the classroom and day-to-day interactions with faculty, students and staff. These characteristics should also translate to appropriate behaviors during clinical rotations. These behaviors go beyond cognitive knowledge and psychomotor skills, and underpinning the communication with the future patient. These behaviors do not appear to be clearly assessed. By not evaluating professional behaviors, students cannot be held accountable in the same way they are for their academic performance. This place the director of clinical education and the department in a precarious situation.

**Recommendation (Essential):** Adopt a professional behaviors assessment method, and perform periodic assessments of students during classroom, practical/ lab sessions, day-to-day interactions within the Department of Physical Therapy.

#### MScPT Program

The MScPT has 2 tracks, thesis and non-thesis. Table 3 (New Tables 2019-2020) indicate the 12 required credits, and a large array of elected courses. This program is geared primarily towards thesis students. The MScPT students strongly identified with the department research mission, and were satisfied with course content and thesis supervision. It seems that the program is less attractive towards the non-thesis track, as there is not enough course variety and many courses outside the program are not available to the students. The self-evaluation indicated the number of years to

complete the master program is between 3-6 years, which is completed on a part-time basis. This time period may be beyond reasonable for a Masters degree.

**Recommendation (Desirable):** Explore issues associated with delayed or longer-term completion of MScPT, and ways to address issues. Consider dropping the MS non-thesis option, or develop a richer non-thesis program. Concentrate on recruitment and funding of thesis track students. This will also help to recruit students for the PhD.

#### PhD Program of Study

The Department does not administer the PhD program. Nevertheless, approximately 8 PhD students within the School's PhD program are currently working with faculty members within the Department as their primary research advisor. The self-evaluation report did not provide an evaluation of the PhD programs in which the current students are involved. However, the committee did meet with several current and past PhD students. Overall, the students we met with were very pleased with the program and noted that they were typically funded at 50% effort. All students that we talked with work as PT ~20 hrs/week during their studies.

**Recommendation (Important):** There is a need for greater funding of PhD students. The program needs to determine the optimal number of PhD students to train each year. Then a plan for attempting to fund these students needs to be put in place. Perhaps students could be funded as teaching assistants, similar to what is done in many graduate programs in the US. This approach would provide valuable teaching experiences for the students and support for the faculty.

During our meeting with the current and former PhD students it was noted that because virtually all students are working, it is often difficult to come to the campus for classes. It is much easier to access online classes.

**Recommendation (Desirable):** We suggest learning from the current COVID challenges and maintain current online seminar and lecture courses as an online option after COVID is no longer a concern. Consider coordinating the scheduling / timing of the core PhD courses offered by the Department/school with working students in mind.

***In this area of evaluation, the Committee determined that Tel Aviv University clearly meets the expected threshold level of performance.***

### **3.5 Teaching and Learning**

The stated mission of the university promotes the use of progressive quality teaching methods; however, it is unclear how frequently teaching methods such as Team-Based learning, simulation training, and flipped classroom strategies are being used in the program. Current students and former graduates reported a majority of traditional instructional methods (lectures) used in the classroom. Teaching involves lectures, laboratory-based learning (of practical skills), and clinical studies during four affiliations (general acute care hospital, outpatient clinics, rehabilitation centers,

and pediatric care). There was no discussion about transitioning post-Covid the use of some of the on-line strategies that worked during the 2020-2021 academic year.

**Recommendations (Essential):** The department should evaluate, assess, and set objectives toward using progressive teaching and learning strategies in 25% of their classes. These should include on-line learning, a repository of video support tools and flipped classrooms to enhance student engagement and learning.

The self-evaluation indicates that the PT program does not have any in-house mechanism for monitoring the quality of teaching; this function is undertaken by TAU's Center for Advancement of Teaching. Student evaluations in most didactic courses is based on performance in multiple choice written exams (71%). Evaluation in only 3% of the courses is based on written assignments and 5% on open questions. Oral presentations were not mentioned as required in any of the courses. Thus, students are not given the opportunity to develop important skills such as writing communication skills, oral presentation skills, peer feedback, and self-reflection.

**Recommendation (Important):** Encourage the faculty to utilize a wider range of evaluation methodologies that will enhance student learning. This can be achieved through courses delivered by the quality assurance department at the university level as well as faculty in-service meetings and peer review.

***In this area of evaluation, the Committee determined that Tel Aviv University clearly meets the expected threshold level of performance.***

### 3.6 Faculty

The Department has 9 (8.25 FTE) full-time senior academic faculty, with an additional recent hire bringing the number of faculty to 10 (9.25 FTE). The academic faculty have a high teaching load, limiting their ability to be competitive for grants and allow collaboration on clinical research. Despite this barrier, the research faculty should be complemented for their high level of productivity. The recent academic faculty hire is not a physical therapist. Greater autonomy for filling of faculty positions would be facilitated with the creation of the Faculty of Health Professions, as recommended under section 3.2. The percentage of non-licensed physical therapists 30% (3 of 10) of the senior academic faculty is a concern.

**Recommendation (Important):** Create bylaws within the Department to maintain a minimum percentage of academic faculty as physiotherapists.

There are clinical faculty within the 2 clinical teachings units at Tel-Hashomer Hospital and the Assaf HaRofeh Hospital teaching unit. The hospital clinical faculty is adequate to address the teaching needs. Within the self-evaluation document and after discussion with students, it does not appear there is the same level of emphasis on diversity and gender initiatives as indicated by the university out-facing documents and mission. The self-evaluation indirectly acknowledged this as did the appendices. When queried, the BPT students didn't feel that the diverse students "self-select" into nursing and the MD programs; a concern that is consistent in all of Israel. The

diversity and gender of faculty is not reflective of the student body; less diversity and gender in the faculty. For faculty, 33% of senior lecturers, and 8.3% identify as minority. Efforts should be made to recruit and retain faculty that represent a percentage of gender and diversity that mirror the student population and Israel population.

**Recommendations (Desirable):** Create mechanisms to enhance recruiting efforts to encourage interest of physiotherapists in masters and PhD programs to attract and train diverse (ethnic, religious, and female) future faculty members.

The Administration (Dean, Head of School, Rector/ Vice-Rector) indicated they need faculty who can teach, practice and do research. However, there is not a clear outline as to the balance workload across teaching, research, and practice. The report format made it difficult to ascertain key details of faculty, who is a physical therapist, their workload effort percentage for teaching and research. Also, the report is inconsistent in both the body of the document and appendices with respect to the number of faculty. Some are cited as full-time and listed as teacher or senior teacher, which it is not clear if they are similar to the clinical track in medicine.

**Recommendations (Important):** The report needs to be clear to provide an understandable report of faculty on multiple points: define effort percentage workloads to clearly understand faculty workload; define who is a physical therapist, who is part-time and who is full-time faculty.

The self-evaluation and interviews describe the evaluation of the faculty by 3 mechanisms: student evaluations, Teaching Committee, and by the Department Chair. As the self-evaluation indicates, less than 50% of students complete the teaching evaluations. Interviews with faculty indicated it is difficult to motivate students to complete evaluations. Peer evaluations are occasionally used by individual faculty members to receive feedback on their teaching. Consideration should be given to use of peer evaluations to more comprehensively assess teaching effectiveness. There is no formalized annual review of each individual faculty. The head of the hospitals noted there is non-formalized feedback and lots of discussion of teaching and methods to improve, but again, this is not formalized. There is a large number of faculty, and it is difficult to provide feedback and mentoring via these informal mechanisms. There appears to be no routine assessments for the multiple adjunct faculty (~75) that play a critical role in administering theory and practice-based coursework in the BPT curriculum. Evaluations need to occur annually for each faculty. Promotion criteria is clearly defined for those on the academic track, and is related to research success. Other than faculty members who are preparing for promotion and tenure, no substantive formal or informal review of each faculty member's research program is provided by the Department. There are no clear and comparable promotion guidelines for the clinical faculty, or yearly faculty assessments. All faculty would benefit from standard yearly evaluations for all aspects of the faculty profile of teaching, research and service as appropriate for each faculty's profile.

**Recommendation (Important):** 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. This yearly evaluation would also measure whether the faculty are aligned with the program mission and goals, and if they are on task for promotion and tenure if appropriate.

***In this area of evaluation, the Committee determined that Tel Aviv University clearly meets the expected threshold level of performance.***

### **3.7 Research**

The TAU Physical Therapy Department is viewed as the leading center of Physical Therapy related research in Israel. The Department's senior faculty members publish at a generally high rate, though the most productive researchers in the Department are not physical therapists. The updated self-evaluation information presented shows that there are currently 5 faculty members within the Department with external funding. The Dean noted that although he appreciates the high teaching loads and "generally less resources" available to the PT faculty, he is still frustrated by the level of grant funding within the Department. He noted the Department of Physical Therapy needs more support to assist with grant writing and management.

**Recommendations (Important):** Consistent with the Dean's observation, the review committee noted that additional technical staff that can help with grant writing are needed to support the research efforts of the Department. The Department Chair and senior faculty need to identify the specific level of support that would be most helpful.

***In this area of evaluation, the Committee determined that Tel Aviv University exceeds the expected threshold level of performance.***

### **3.8 Students**

The review committee met with 4 BPT Students (1 first year, 2 second years and 3 third year), three MScPT students (all thesis track) and four PhD students. We found that all of the students were engaging and were proud of their affiliation with TAU. The majority of comments were positive; and a deep respect for the faculty was evidenced in the interactions with the review team. They felt leadership, research, and clinical expertise were well balanced within the coursework; the majority of leadership was taught at the two external schools. Despite the curriculum burden, they felt it strengthened their ability to understand the clinical content in the third and fourth years.

Students and alumni reported the first three years were very challenging and compressed. It is difficult to work outside the program, which in many cases is a necessity particularly since living in Tel Aviv is expensive. They reported heavy theory-related coursework, early in the curriculum, was useful for the clinical

content, but they did indicate that time in class of up to 40 hours a week in the first two years was common, with close to the same number of hours in the third year. Our evaluation demonstrates numerous courses with high levels of contact hours in topics that may be redundant or overemphasized (please see earlier recommendations).

**Recommendations (Important):** We suggest that the department consider the adoption of modern teaching methods (e.g., online learning, flipped classroom, problem-based learning). This will improve student burden and is something that the students' felt was necessary.

Within the self-evaluation document and after discussion with students, it does not appear to be the same level of emphasis on diversity and gender initiatives as indicated by the university out-facing documents and mission. The self-evaluation indirectly acknowledged this as did the appendices.

**Recommendations (Desirable):** Consider developing initiatives to encourage interest in physiotherapy at the high school level of all students, to represent the entire population of Israel to include gender and diversity.

The current feedback process may not be effective, as only ~50% of students complete the assessment.

**Recommendations (Essential):** Re-evaluate student assessment strategy (in addition to the department's assessment strategy) to include embedded assessment options to increase percentages of feedback and other methods to improve the voice of the student.

The MScPT students saw great value in the choices available for study. The students appeared very driven, and all enjoyed school and wanted to do research. They also reported that the Masters level training helped with clinical training of PT students. As a whole, they spoke positively about their experiences within the coursework that they took. All three reported challenges with ongoing research during COVID. Many felt that permanent changes after COVID may benefit some of the travel challenges they have had traditionally. Some expect that their education will extend (time-wise) beyond earlier expectations. None of them used the national Israeli database for research.

**Recommendations (Desirable):** Consider using available databases for a contingency plan since the majority of students are delayed in their Helsinki approval and patient enrollment. Consider using distance learning to support students who travel for research reasons, when a live visit isn't necessary.

The Department does not organize or administer a PhD program, but faculty in the Department actively mentor students (8 PhD students in 2018/2019) as their primary research advisor. The PhD students felt they are getting an excellent education, and feel productive with their research. They did suggest a reduction of non-clinical coursework, and a greater emphasis on specialized / electives for their intended area of research.

**Recommendation (Desirable):** Consider a reduction of coursework as able, to allow for an emphasis on specialized areas of practice. Consider using distance learning to

reduce unnecessary travel burden when teaching and for research meetings. More statistical analysis support should be provided.

***In this area of evaluation, the Committee determined that Tel Aviv University clearly meets the expected threshold level of performance.***

### 3.9 Infrastructure

The University space provided for teaching and research is not optimal. The spaces for teaching and research are not contiguous, making it difficult to manage, collaborate, and innovate both the curriculum and research enterprises. Students are also disjointed in their education by the physical space issues. More space is needed for the research enterprise if it is expected to grow and be competitive for high-level research grants.

**Recommendation (Important):** Create a single unified physical space for the university teaching and research for the Department of Physical Therapy. Adding 2 additional floors to the Raymond Building is critical to the success of the teaching and research enterprises within the Department.

***In this area of evaluation, the Committee determined that Tel Aviv University clearly meets the expected threshold level of performance.***

## Section 4: Recommendations

### Essential

1. The Head of the BScPT program should be a physical therapist. If the Department Chairperson is a licensed physical therapist, then the Head of the Physical Therapy program could also be the Department Chairperson.
2. Develop a Department policy that indicates a percentage of physical therapists required to maintain in the Department. This will provide for greater autonomy for filling faculty positions, to ensure proper balance of clinical, teaching, and research expertise is maintained within the Department.
3. An organized and self-reflective self-evaluation report is needed. Hence, a new self-evaluation needs to be submitted. The report should be reviewed and proofread for flow, presentation, accuracy, and completeness. The report must demonstrate self-reflection and analysis were used to identify what is needed to improve the program. A review of the prior CHE conducted evaluation, recommendations, implementation and outcomes of changes based is needed. This is essential for the evaluation of the physical therapy program.



4. The Department must develop and implement an effective formal process for curriculum review of the BScPT and MScPT programs within 1 year. The process must be clearly documented, and the results of at least the first round of self-evaluation must be presented to the CHE using the format outlined within the instructions for completing components 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4 of the present self-evaluation report. The committee membership for formal assessment should include stakeholders of faculty with broad representation across the BScPT program (including adjuncts), current students, and clinical instructors. On a less frequent basis, an extensive review should take place that involves external reviewers and alumni to provide objective assessment of the curriculum.
5. Create and measure yearly formal student learning outcomes to determine program performance.
6. A formal process of program curriculum review must be undertaken to continue to consolidate and modernize the current curriculum. A recommendation is provided in the QA & Self-Evaluation process. The formal process of curricular review outline in 3.3 should be used to aid in reducing the number of credits and/or student workload to a more acceptable level. Consider reducing the number of courses and avoid redundancies between courses. Also consider coordinating the number of exams and assignments during and at the end of each semester to ensure a balanced workload across the program. The use of both an internal and external review panel should be used for this formal process. This formal review of the program curriculum should occur on a regular basis more often than the current 10-12-year review cycle of the CHE.
7. Make the interprofessional PBL available to all students. Consider other methods to involve students in interprofessional learning experiences.
8. Adopt a professional behaviors assessment method, and perform periodic assessments of students during classroom, practical/ lab sessions, day-to-day interactions within the Department of Physical Therapy.
9. The department should evaluate, assess, and set objectives toward using progressive teaching and learning strategies in 25% of their classes. These should include on-line learning, a repository of video support tools and flipped classrooms to enhance student engagement and learning.
10. Re-evaluate student assessment strategy (in addition to the department's assessment strategy) to include embedded assessment options to increase percentages of feedback and other methods to improve the voice of the student.

### **Important**

1. The Department of Physical Therapy should be its own School (School of Physical Therapy), within a newly formed Faculty of Health Professions.

2. Develop a process to determine why the drop-out rate is high, significantly higher than other Israel programs. Evaluate the uncovered reasons and make a plan for remedy of those modifiable factors.
3. Develop a mechanism for integrating all teaching faculty in the department in order to develop a more cohesive study program. Consider holding 2-4 faculty meetings per year, and invite all faculty to facilitate self-evaluation and discussion regarding the programs in the Department of Physical Therapy.
4. There is a need for greater funding of PhD students. The program needs to determine the optimal number of PhD students to train each year. Then a plan for attempting to fund these students needs to be put in place. Perhaps students could be funded as teaching assistants, similar to what is done in many graduate programs in the US. This approach would provide valuable teaching experiences for the students and support for the faculty.
5. Encourage the faculty to utilize a wider range of evaluation methodologies that will enhance student learning. This can be achieved through courses delivered by the quality assurance department at the university level as well as faculty in-service meetings and peer review.
6. Create bylaws within the Department to maintain a minimum percentage of academic faculty as physiotherapists.
7. The report needs to be clear to provide an understandable report of faculty on multiple points: define effort percentage workloads to clearly understand faculty workload; define who is a physical therapist, who is part-time and who is full-time faculty.
8. 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. This yearly evaluation would also measure whether the faculty are aligned with the program mission and goals, and if they are on task for promotion and tenure if appropriate.
9. Consistent with the Dean's observation, the review committee noted that additional technical staff that can help with grant writing are needed to support the research efforts of the Department. The Department Chair and senior faculty need to identify the specific level of support that would be most helpful.
10. We suggest that the department consider the adoption of modern teaching methods (e.g., online learning, flipped classroom, problem-based learning). This will improve student burden and is something that the students' felt was necessary.
11. Create a single unified physical space for the university teaching and research for the Department of Physical Therapy. Adding 2 additional floors to the Raymond Building is critical to the success of the teaching and research enterprises within the Department.

## **Desirable**

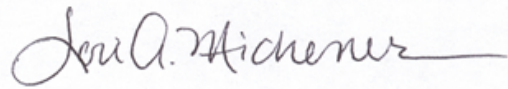
1. Explore issues associated with delayed or longer-term completion of MScPT, and ways to address issues. Consider dropping the MS non-thesis option, or develop a richer non-thesis program. Concentrate on recruitment and funding of thesis track students. This will also help to recruit students for the PhD.
2. We suggest learning from the current COVID challenges and maintain current online seminar and lecture courses as an online option after COVID is no longer a concern. Consider coordinating the scheduling / timing of the core PhD courses offered by the Department/school with working students in mind.
3. Create mechanisms to enhance recruiting efforts to encourage interest of physiotherapists in masters and PhD programs to attract and train diverse (ethnic, religious, and female) future faculty members.
4. Consider developing initiatives to encourage interest in physiotherapy at the high school level of all students, to represent the entire population of Israel to include gender and diversity.
5. Consider using available databases for a contingency plan since the majority of students are delayed in their Helsinki approval and patient enrollment. Consider using distance learning to support students who travel for research reasons, when a live visit isn't necessary.
6. Consider a reduction of coursework as able, to allow for an emphasis on specialized areas of practice. Consider using distance learning to reduce unnecessary travel burden when teaching and for research meetings. More statistical analysis support should be provided.

**Signed by:**



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Prof., Stuart Binder-MacLeod  
Chair



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Prof. Lori A. Michener



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Prof. Chad Cook



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Prof. Yocheved Laufer

## Appendix 1 – Letter of appointment



January 2020

Prof. Emeritus Stuart Binder Macleod  
Department of physical therapy  
University of Delaware  
USA

Dear Professor,

The Israeli Council for Higher Education (CHE) strives to ensure the continuing excellence and quality of Israeli higher education through a systematic evaluation process. By engaging upon this mission, the CHE seeks: to enhance and ensure the quality of academic studies, to provide the public with information regarding the quality of study programs in institutions of higher education throughout Israel, and to ensure the continued integration of the Israeli system of higher education in the international academic arena.

As part of this important endeavor we reach out to world renowned academicians to help us meet the challenges that confront the Israeli higher education by accepting our invitation to participate in our international evaluation committees. This process establishes a structure for an ongoing consultative process around the globe on common academic dilemmas and prospects.

I therefore deeply appreciate your willingness to join us in this crucial enterprise.

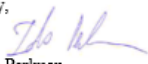
It is with great pleasure that I hereby appoint you to serve as a member of the Council for Higher Education's Committee for the Evaluation of **Physical Therapy** departments. In addition to yourself, the composition of the Committee will be as follows: Prof. Lori Michener, prof. Chad Cook, and prof. ~~Yocheved~~ Laufer.

Ms. Alex ~~Buslovich Bilik~~ will be the coordinator of the Committee.

Details regarding the operation of the committee and its mandate are provided in the enclosed appendix.

I wish you much success in your role as a member of this most important committee.

Sincerely,

  
Prof. Ido Perliman  
Vice Chair,  
The Council for Higher Education (CHE)

*Enclosures:* Appendix to the Appointment Letter of Evaluation Committees

cc: Dr. Varda Ben-Shaul, Deputy Director-General for QA, CHE  
Ms. Alex ~~Buslovich Bilik~~, Committee Coordinator

## Appendix 2 – visit schedule



<b>Physical Therapy Evaluation Committee - Schedule of online visit</b>		
<b>Tel Aviv University</b>		
<b>Sunday, February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021</b>		
<b>*The visit will be divided into 2 half days, starting at 17:00 (Israel time)</b>		
<b>*Meetings are conducted in a Q&amp;A format</b>		
Time	Subject	Participants
17:00-17:30	Opening session with the heads of the institution	<u>Prof. Mark Shtajf</u> , TAU Rector <u>Prof. Eval Zisser</u> , Vice Rector
17:30-18:00	Meeting with the Dean of Faculty of Medicine*	<u>Prof. Ehud Grossman</u>
<b>18:00-18:15</b>	<b>Break</b>	
18:15-18:45	Meeting with the Head of the School of health professions *	<b>Prof. Nava Razon</b>
18:45-19:15	Presentation by the Head of the Department of physical therapy *	<b>Prof. Dario Liebermann</b>
19:15-19:45	Meeting with the Head of the Department of physical therapy (Q&A)*	<b>Prof. Dario Liebermann</b>
19:45-20:00	Virtual tour*** of facilities and infrastructure followed by a short Q&A*	

\* The heads of the institution and academic unit or their representatives will not attend these meetings.

\*\*\* The visit will be conducted in English with the exception of students who may speak in Hebrew and anyone else who feels unable to converse in English.

\*\*\* the virtual tour refers to the recording sent by the institution prior to the visit

**Monday, February 8th, 2021**

17:00-18:00	Meeting with senior academic staff * (including academic heads of programs)	Prof. Zeevi Dvir Prof. <del>Ruti Defrin</del> Prof. Michal Katz Leurer Dr. Tamara <del>Prushansky</del> -Meir – Coordinator of Graduate Degree program Dr. Jason Friedman – Head of the Master's degree program
<b>18:00-18:15</b>	<b>break</b>	
18:15-18:45	Meeting with Adjunct academic staff *	Dr. Orna Gera Granot – Academic staff Dr. Chen Kugel - Academic staff (Director of Israel National Center of Forensic Medicine)
18:15-18:45	Meeting with instructors/Clinical instructors/Clinical center heads (in relevant disciplines)*	Noga Gal – Head physical therapy school at Shamir Medical Center affiliated with Tel Aviv University Dania Hofi - Head physical therapy school at Sheba Medical Center affiliated with Tel Aviv University
<b>18:45-19:00</b>	<b>break</b>	
19:00-19:30	Meeting with BA students**	***
19:00-19:30	Meeting with Alumni**	***
19:30-20:00	Meeting with MA students**	***
19:30-20:00	Meeting with Ph.D students**	***

\* The heads of the institution and academic unit or their representatives will not attend these meetings.

\*\*\* The visit will be conducted in English with the exception of students who may speak in Hebrew and anyone else who feels unable to converse in English.

\*\*\* the virtual tour refers to the recording sent by the institution prior to the visit