



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ

HELLENIC REPUBLIC

Α.ΔΙ.Π.

H.Q.A.

ΑΡΧΗ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ & ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ
ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΑΝΩΤΑΤΗ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗ

HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE
AND ACCREDITATION AGENCY

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

Department of Occupational Therapy
TEI of Athens

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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION & RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS, CULTURE & SPORTS
MANAGING AUTHORITY

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External Evaluation Committee

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the Department of the Technological Educational Institute (TEI) of Athens consisted of the following four (4) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by the HQA in accordance with Law 3374/2005:

1. Professor E. Sharon Brintnell (Coordinator)
University of Alberta, Edmonton Canada

2. Professor Rosemary Crouch
University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg South Africa

3. Professor Andrew Papanicolaou,
University of Tennessee, Tennessee, USA

4. Associate Professor Georgia Panayiotou
University of Cyprus, Nicosia Cyprus

Introduction

I The External Evaluation Procedure:

Firstly, the committee visited the Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency (HQA) headquarters for a brief orientation meeting to the process. The committee felt that this orientation was not adequate in content and therefore not useful.

The committee arrived at the TEI headquarters on Monday 17/2/2014 and met briefly with the Vice President and Dean of the TEI Athens. The Committee then met with the Internal Evaluation Committee (the Chair of the OT Department and two of the tenured members of the faculty) for an initial discussion of the process and documentation. We were introduced to the Department and the way the self-evaluation was conducted. We also asked for additional required documents, including faculty CVs, European Qualification Framework (EQF) criteria for Level 6 education and course syllabi. On Tuesday 18/2/2014 the committee visited the premises of the Occupational Therapy (OT) program and a) was given a tour of the facilities and library, b) met with the faculty and Chair, c) with the faculty without the Chair present, d) members of the Hellenic Association of Ergotherapy (Occupational Therapy), e) adjunct faculty members and f) current students. Two of the teaching hospital facilities where students are trained in clinical practice and practical training were also visited:

1. The K AT (General Hospital of Athens) Occupational therapy Department where patients with TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury), spinal cord injuries, neurological and orthopaedic conditions are treated.
2. The Special unit of the Children's Hospital of Athens (Aglaia Kiriakou) Occupational Therapy Department where children with Autism Spectrum Disorders, Psychiatric and Behavioural disorders and Asperger's Syndrome are treated.

On Wednesday 19/2/2014 we visited the central TEI facilities and were introduced to the President. This was followed by a tour of the library and Student Health and Wellness service supports. At a brief meeting with the Chair and faculty members we discussed some pending issues and requested some extra documentation including examination papers and undergraduate theses.

II. Internal Evaluation Procedure

Regarding the self-evaluation procedure, it appeared that the faculty had some difficulty describing their program within the structure of the HQ form. It was not evident if the Department were given clear guidelines about providing supporting documentation of their self-evaluation statements in relevant appendices. All documentation that was missing was given once the committee requested it, though some of it (CVs) was in Greek.

As stated by the Chair and faculty, the mission of the Department of Occupational Therapy is to promote and develop the knowledge of the science of Occupational Therapy through educational procedures and applied research providing the students with the opportunities to acquire all the competencies required of a graduate Occupational Therapist, in order to ensure their scientific and professional development and career.

Based on the evaluation procedure, the committee believes that this mission is partly met.

The component that pertains to education and the development of knowledge and skills is well met, but there appear to be weaknesses in the execution of applied research. This is in part due to the overload of the faculty with teaching hours and the absence of clear motives to promote faculty research and an academic climate. This will be discussed in detail below. In spite of any difficulties, the Department has managed to meet level 6 criteria as a Bachelor's level program, and to educate clinicians in Occupational Therapy who make an important contribution to the local society and fill a crucial need in the Greek Health Care and Social Systems.

A. Curriculum

To be filled separately for each undergraduate, graduate and doctoral programme.

APPROACH

The curriculum is mostly consistent with the mission of the Department to develop clinicians that fill the needs of the market and society. The curriculum provides a good balance between theoretical and applied courses and foundation courses in science. The plan of achieving these goals is realized through a mostly fixed program with some elective options and occasional revisions of the curriculum based on feedback from students and external collaborators. More frequent revisions of the curriculum, based on the expertise of the faculty and the changing needs of society and the students should be encouraged and any bureaucratic procedures that hinder this process should be reduced.

IMPLEMENTATION AND RESULTS

The curriculum, including the clinical placements meets and even exceeds the World Federation of Occupational Therapy (WFOT) minimum criterion of 1000 hours. Members of the committee visited two external clinical placement facilities, met the occupational therapy staff and the students that were undergoing practical training in these facilities, and at the General Hospital watched a student treating a patient. It was felt that the quality of clinical learning was very high, but there was concern about the inadequate space for treatment, the limitations as far as equipment and materials were concerned and the lack of space for staff and students. Although the curriculum and clinical training are evaluated to be overall quite adequate, some more emphasis on assessment and evaluation and theoretical conceptualization of clinical cases may be given in the future. Also, if possible, practical experiences with real patients should start to be implemented earlier in the program. One of the difficulties identified is the faculty members invest a great amount of effort into supervising students while they are in Semester 5 and 6. However in Semester 8 the faculty members leave the majority of the supervision to the occupational therapy clinical staff yet the final report on the student's competencies is completed by the faculty members. Recommendations will be made in this regard. Alternative options should be considered that may shift some of the responsibility to external supervisors and reduce the burden on the faculty.

Members of the professional community all of whom are graduates of the program attested to the quality of the students and to the improvements made to the curriculum during its last revision.

IMPROVEMENT

- The faculty should feel free to revise the curriculum as often as needed. One change that the faculty sees as important is to reduce slightly the ECTS allocated to basic science courses in favor of more applied Occupational Therapy courses. This may help address the issue of greater emphasis on patient assessment and evaluation and the Department is encouraged to consider this option.
- Regarding the work load of faculty supervision of the placements, additional models can be explored, including a) supervising larger groups of students in the Department in the form of a practicum seminar while reducing direct supervision and site visits, and b) giving more responsibility to external supervisors while acting

as gate keepers to the profession via a final clinical competency exam that can be conducted by the faculty and external practitioners jointly.

The Department may also consider sending students to clinical settings in pairs or larger groups to reduce administrative load and supervision.

B. Teaching

APPROACH:

The faculty have shown a great commitment and dedication to their roles as educators, with student education being the greatest emphasis of the Department. Overall, this mission appears to be accomplished more than adequately, especially in the absence of adequate infrastructure and faculty educational support.

IMPLEMENTATION

Teaching methods are diverse and include lectures, role plays, case discussions and hands-on practical experiences in laboratory courses and actual patient experiences offered in clinical settings. Overall, an attempt is made to integrate students into their professional roles. However, the program delivery could benefit from access to updated and modern infrastructure platforms that support educational approaches, evaluation procedures and the use of multimedia technologies. This should be available in all classroom settings.

Occupational therapy as a health discipline requires the development and meeting of certain professional competencies through process learning (learning by doing) in the academic setting, making this infrastructure even more essential. The available space and the quality of some of the equipment are very inadequate for the mission of the program. The equipment used in the laboratory classes is dated and in stark contrast to much of that used in clinical teaching sites elsewhere. The space needs renovating and refurbishing.

The faculty should be flexible in deciding on the best assessment and examination methods for their program and courses. Evaluation strategies generally are and should be even more congruent with the level of learning being accessed such as information acquisition, application, synthesis and creativity (Bloom's Taxonomy).

RESULTS

Overall the course syllabi appear to cover the various domains of Occupational Therapy well and contribute to the education of generalist new professionals. Education in research consumption is adequate at the theoretical level. The absence of a research climate and lack of possibility for faculty to actively engage in research prohibits the modelling and application of these skills to learning how to conduct research on the part of the students.

The efficacy of teaching is assessed regularly through student evaluations, which is only partially adequate as an assessment tool. Alternative methods of evaluating teaching effectiveness are necessary to assess learning outcomes as well as to increase monitoring of the teaching quality of adjunct staff. Members of the professional community (recent graduates) all felt well prepared for entry level positions.

IMPROVEMENT

- The Department appears overall satisfied with its teaching and has not proposed any improvements though an interest was expressed by them in exploring new strategies.
- The committee recommends that all faculty have access and are encouraged to use the services of an institutional Teaching Resource Centre for excellence in teaching. This type of facility can familiarize them with new learner centred teaching methods,

so that they can best fulfil their role as educators, which is clearly their most valued mission.

- There appears to be no formal procedure in the system that gives the Department Chair and permanent faculty a way to monitor and mentor external adjunct faculty and new members of the Department, mostly due to a culture of “academic freedom”. However, a mentorship model is crucial in the development of new academic and clinical educators. Therefore the committee encourages the Department and the overall TEI system to implement a model of mentoring junior and adjunct faculty, through discussion of needs and teaching methods and occasional visits to their classrooms as well as written evaluation to the faculty about extending or not the contracts of adjunct faculty members, based on their performance.

C. Research

For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate level, if necessary.

APPROACH

There is no formal policy in the Department of occupational therapy regarding research. Given the very high teaching loads, the allocation of much time to the supervision of undergraduate research, we concluded that the expectation of faculty engaging in research is unrealistic. The administrative load of the faculty also precludes students undertaking supervised research. In spite of this, many faculty members engage in post graduate research and some have international peer reviewed publications. The clinical supervisors and faculty members are noticeably involved in updating their qualifications in other universities in Greece and abroad, which they manage to accomplish in their own time and without official support.

The committee believes that through much needed support by the State, and the encouragement of a research culture within the TEI system, as well as a readjustment of where the time of faculty members is allocated, an improvement of the research productivity can be achieved.

IMPLEMENTATION AND RESULTS

Samples of student dissertations were perused and are well compiled and reflect an adequate knowledge of research methods.

At a post-graduate level there are a few projects that the faculty undertook on their own, especially on burnout in professional working with clinical populations and also on driving in Alzheimer's patients. Through these projects there are active collaborations with other Departments in the country. One of the faculty members is currently working towards a Ph.D. degree. There appears to be an appreciation of the need for research and of a need for students to understand research. However, in the current situation it is difficult to actively integrate research into the teaching program of the Department.

There are some peer reviewed publications among the faculty, several conference presentations many of which are on professional issues and theory rather than empirical in nature.

IMPROVEMENT

The faculty seems to choose to maintain the status quo with an emphasis on teaching and they expressed a strong concern that an increase in research involvement would result in a degradation of the quality of teaching. This is understandable in the context of no support or infrastructure and no motives to engage in research. Given that most faculty members are at the Masters level, engaging in research cannot improve any further their chances of promotion, while teaching loads remain the same regardless of research productivity.

- More faculty members are needed, especially with doctoral level education to fill the various levels of ranks that are currently vacant, and to decrease the teaching and administrative load.
- Specific motives should be provided for research involvement such as course reductions, and reduction in supervision duties.

- Support and encouragement in the seeking of external funding is needed given that these faculty members do not have the research experience or administrative support to seek funding on their own.
- The allocation of too much effort in the supervision of undergraduate theses, burdens the faculty unnecessarily. A more efficient way of doing this process needs to be encouraged and supported, for example theses need not be examined by a 3 member committee. The inclusion of a research experience course instead of a thesis, where students are given credit for assisting in faculty research and producing a brief by high quality research report may facilitate research among faculty and also give more applied research experience to the students.

D. All Other Services

For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate level, if necessary.

APPROACH

There seems to be few support services to the faculty who are overburdened by large classes and can hardly make ends meet in spite of their obvious dedication to the program. More administrative support is required particularly for the ongoing activities associated with the recruiting of sites and placing of approximately 100 students four times a year. Better procedures, less bureaucracy and better technical support may improve the current situation along with a much needed decrease in student/faculty ratios. The high demand for occupational therapy services puts further pressure on the program to graduate occupational therapists.

Students are adequately involved in the program. New teaching methods can be explored that encourage class attendance. This may require some divergence from traditional teaching methods that seem to be encouraged in the broader system. Teachers could have the liberty for example to include unexpected tests in their assessment, and also to introduce material in lectures that may not necessarily be included in the readings.

IMPLEMENTATION

- There is need for better classrooms, equipped with projectors, TV monitors and other multimedia systems. The current building infrastructure hinders the use of creative teaching methods.
- The electronic library is adequate but there are very few recently printed books and materials
- There are no facilities and labs for research
- There is no student cafeteria at the Department, which may discourage attendance
- The Department is very far away from the central TEI premises and therefore cannot use its resources
- Occupational therapy labs are well used but outdated.

RESULTS

Faculty are overburdened with administrative duties, which prohibits research development. Teaching quality is hindered by the lack of appropriate infrastructure, in spite of the efforts of the faculty to provide the best education possible.

IMPROVEMENTS

- Better infrastructure in terms of classrooms, technical equipment (projectors, TVs, student computer stations) are required
- More secretarial and administrative support is needed. This could be in the form of a masters level practicum co-ordinator at an administrative position who would reduce co-ordination burden and some supervision burden from the faculty.
- Student socialization facilities, such as a cafeteria would greatly improve the quality of services to the students

Collaboration with social, cultural and production organizations

There are few collaborations with research institutions and policy makers. There are some bilateral agreements with other universities in Europe. Most of these collaborations are with clinical placement sites and these are actively maintained.

Given the significant role and the unique position of this Department in Occupational Therapy to health services in general, a greater leadership role in policy making should be encouraged.

E. Strategic Planning, Perspectives for Improvement and Dealing with Potential Inhibiting Factors

The Department wants to maintain its current role of educating occupational therapists, which is a significant contribution to society. The significant impact of investing in this Department can be documented by the high demand for Occupational Therapists in Greece and the very low unemployment rates amongst graduates. Demands are expected to increase further as projected by the World Health Organization. The Department meets this role well by educating occupational therapists who are competent, readily able to function independently and apparently highly competitive when applying to masters programs locally and abroad.

To the degree that the state would like to see an improvement of research culture and productivity, this would be contingent upon the increase in numbers of faculty members, especially at the Ph.D. level as mentioned above, and funding and administrative support for research. Some re-organization of the time allocation of faculty members as described above can also be considered.

F. Final Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC

For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate level, if necessary.

The conclusion of the committee is that:

- The program of the Occupational Therapy Department functions at a level 6, Bachelors level as documented by the congruency of the program and other equal level programs abroad, the satisfaction of WFOT criteria, the competitiveness of its graduates when applying for masters programs locally and abroad.
- The curriculum is judged to be adequate and reflects the needs of the students and the profession. A somewhat better integration of theory and application earlier in the curriculum is encouraged. It is recommended that students be exposed to clinical areas and actual cases earlier in the curriculum. It is also recommended that at least two, if not three, clinical areas be used in Semester 8 so that students have a broader exposure to various age groups, types of conditions and injury and treatment modalities. Under no circumstances should a student remain in one clinical area for the 6 months of Semester 8. Faculty members are highly dedicated to the education of their students and very committed to their role. It is recommended that some of the burden of the students' final evaluation in Semester 8 include an evaluation by the clinical supervisor where possible. They could benefit from access to free continuing education in teaching methods and approaches as well as better technical and laboratory infrastructure.
- We realize that the level of research conducted is lower than ideal for a university level institution. However, given the work load of the faculty and the lack of access to support and funds or the provision of clear motives for engagement in research this is understandable. Engagement in research should not be done at the cost of student learning. Some solutions to this problem could pertain to an increase in the number of faculty members, especially at the Ph.D. level, access to funding and research assistants. The faculty could also shift the emphasis from undergraduate theses to research experience and try to lower their time investment in supervising theses and practicum work.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

We recommend for the Department of Occupational Therapy that:

- More faculty positions are created at the Ph.D. level to decrease student/faculty ratios and encourage an academic culture. This is the best way to encourage research at the Department and to advance to a university level.
- More investment in administrative and educational infrastructure because of the very significant social and economic function it fills.
- It remains autonomous. The merging with other Departments, such as Physical Therapy is not to be considered as it would be detrimental to meeting society's health and social needs.

We recommend for the TEI system the following:

- To implement the development of a Center of Excellence for Teaching and Learning to support the development of new teaching methods and approaches.
- To promote procedures for mentoring of new and adjunct faculty and monitoring their performance by the permanent staff of the Departments.

The Members of the Committee

Name and Surname

Signature

1. _Professor Sharon Brintnell_____
2. _Professor Rosemary Crouch_____
3. _Professor Andrew Papanicolaou_____
4. _Associate Professor Georgia Panayiotou_____