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 ΣΤΗΝ ΑΝΩΤΑΤΗ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗ

HELLENIC REPUBLIC
H.Q.A.
 HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE AND
 ACCREDITATION AGENCY

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

DEPARTMENT of Physiotherapy

Technological Educational Institute of Western Greece



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N.B. The structure of the “Template” proposed for the External Evaluation Report mirrors the requirements of Law 3374/2005 and corresponds overall to the structure of the Internal Evaluation Report submitted by the Department.

The length of text in each box is free. Questions included in each box are not exclusive nor should they always be answered separately; they are meant to provide a general outline of matters that should be addressed by the Committee when formulating its comments.

Introduction

I. The External Evaluation Procedure

The dates of the site visit took place between 17-19 February 2014 at the Physiotherapy Department at the TEI of Patras located in Aigio, Greece.

The Committee met the President, Vice-President for academic affairs, Dean of Health Sciences of the TEI of Patras; Head of the Physiotherapy Department, Dr Elias Tsepis; the permanent members of physiotherapy staff, Dr Konstantinos Koutsogiannis, Dr Konstantinos Fousekis and Dr Evdokia Billis; external collaborators including part-time scientific collaborators, clinical staff involved in students clinical practice and placement; administrative staff including the librarian and physiotherapy department secretary; students located both on site and via teleconference for those currently completing part of their studies, or practical placement, overseas. The committee members also met with the Mayor and Head of Commerce of Aigio, Greece and the Technical Director of Panaigialios FC, a social partner.

Facilities visited by the External Evaluation Committee included the main campus of the TEI of Patras, the Physiotherapy Department located in Aigio, Greece (lecture theatres, teaching and research laboratories, library, administrative and staff offices) and clinical setting in local teaching hospitals.

The data examined by the Committee include the validated internal evaluation report prepared by MODEP dated January 2011, the 2012 non-validated internal evaluation report prepared by the permanent members of physiotherapy staff, and the undergraduate physiotherapy programme-study guide. Various other documentation included the senior project guide, samples of senior projects and dissertations, list of recommended textbooks, library guide, student welfare report, international student and research collaborations report, copy of student exam questions, marking criteria for clinical practice and senior project, samples of student work, and documentation regarding available facilities.

II. The Internal Evaluation Procedure

The sources and documentation used for the internal evaluation procedure (January 2011 document) were appropriate for education and research. However, there was a lack of documentation regarding the dissemination of knowledge and service to the local community and society in general which considers being an integral part of University entity. A table with the frequency of answers to each question of the student questionnaire is included in the Appendix and selected bar charts are presented. However, its validity and reliability are not presented. In addition, the student evaluation was only performed in 4/41 modules of the programme and, as such, cannot be deemed as representative since it was implemented on a preliminary pilot basis. Even though the four dimensions (approach, implementation, results and improvement) of each field of the academic unit’s activities, which the internal evaluation has monitored (curriculum, teaching, research and improvements and all other services) are not presented clearly, nevertheless, the whole process is deemed as a positive step towards

quality assurance.

A. Curriculum

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

APPROACH

No curriculum goals are defined, but rather only departmental and module ones, either in the study programme or internal evaluation report. The curriculum design has been based on the World Confederation of Physical Therapy (WCPT) education guidelines. However, in the non-ratified 2012 version it is stated that the design is also based on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF, level 6). All constituents of the Department were consulted for curriculum design; students and other stakeholders were not. There was no set procedure in place for the revision of the curriculum.

IMPLEMENTATION

There was evidence that certain aspects of the curriculum promote departmental goals. For example, one of the main aims of the student dissertation is to update staff's knowledge with regards to recent developments in their academic field and produce physiotherapy related research.

The curriculum is thorough with regards to content and fulfills many of the criteria set out in the WCPT guidelines and EQF framework. Nevertheless, there is only minimal evidence of critical elements that the provision of physical therapy interventions/treatments are aimed at prevention of impairments, activity limitations, participation restrictions and injury including the promotion and maintenance of health and quality of life in all ages and populations; determine a plan of care and goals that are patient/client goals; and to provide, whenever possible, evidence based physical therapy interventions/treatments to achieve patient/client goals and outcomes.

The curriculum is coherent and functional. However, learning outcomes for individual modules are not based on Bloom's taxonomy and as such they are not securing progression of teaching. In addition there are no detailed course outlines including information such as weekly lecture themes and learning outcomes, examination format, and grade allocation.

Material is made available for each module including a module handbook and textbooks. However, references are often dated and access to recent literature is difficult due to technical reasons/subscriptions. There is also a delay of one month between the start of term and delivery of textbooks. Laboratory based teaching sessions do not have a comprehensive handbook stating clear objectives and procedures, and possible report questions and references.

There are adequate resources for laboratory based sessions for up to 20 students in a group. Current group size though averages 30-32 students due to the lack of permanent or hourly employed staff. Both the permanent and the interviewed hourly employed departmental staff are highly qualified. However, as already identified in the internal evaluation, there is no input and, therefore, no demands or possibility for a uniform parity between the academic requirements and the daily clinical practice supervised by hospital employed physiotherapists during practical placement.

RESULTS

Most of the department's predefined goals are achieved with the curriculum implementation. However, it is unclear how a focus on a) following developments and

changes in the physiotherapy profession and b) ongoing inclusion of current research in the curriculum is achieved. This is compounded by the limited library resources and the fact that e-journal access is limited both in regards to subscription and access (i.e. only onsite during library opening hours) which affects updating current knowledge based on international developments. As exemplified by the often dated references included in module handbooks. A solution to the above has not yet been identified by the department.

Upon reflection by the Departmental staff, it has been identified that the lack of technical infrastructure (distant e-journal access) presents a significant limitation towards the implementation of the aforementioned curriculum goals. Furthermore, the curriculum structure does not facilitate the development of an evidence-based culture that would be reflected not only in the dissertation but also in every academic and clinical aspect of the students' learning.

IMPROVEMENT

The Department has identified, or expects, that the implementation of the curriculum would be improved by securing a larger number of faculty, and, thus, improving the student to staff ratio. However, it has not been recognized that the implementation of an evidence-based culture within the teaching practice is fundamental for meeting the curriculum design, as intended by the WCPT and EQF guidelines.

B. Teaching

APPROACH

The Department does not have a defined pedagogic policy with regard to their teaching approach and methodology. Teaching methods used include lectures, laboratory application and experiments, clinical training and practice, dissertation, small reports, and independent consultation.

There is evidence of a sufficient web based interaction between students and members of staff including an internet based interactive application platform (e-class), social media (Facebook) and the departmental website including staff web pages.

As stated earlier the staff/student ratio is very high leading to large lecture, clinical practice and laboratory groups and updating of available references.

The adequacy of teaching resources was discussed under the “Curriculum” heading.

With regards to the examination system and due to the lack of an identifiable progression in learning outcomes it cannot be ensured that there is parity between learning outcomes and assessment. Furthermore, the lack of peer review of exam content, and the optional extra credit through additional coursework does not ensure uniformity and validity. Also, there are no defined and documented assessment criteria throughout the curriculum, exam marking is not blinded, there is no indicative content, and no quality assurance of the marking procedure (i.e. double marking). An exception is the dissertation which is marked by a committee with clear documented assessment criteria.

The fact that rotation to various settings during practice placement (hospital, community and/or private sector, sport clubs, schools etc.) is not allowed, limits a comprehensive experience.

There is a clear difference between participating in clinical training modules and participating in the practical placement. Regarding the first, the department has established, elaborated and made publicly available (webpage, e-class, clinical practice guide) assessment criteria for clinical practice. This guide is novel and is the result of extensive work (review of respective clinical modules from PT undergraduate courses abroad etc.) and several meetings among the staff of the department.

However, the lack of assessment criteria in the evaluation by clinicians during the practice placement can lead to a skewed deviation of grades, as expected.

There is no established procedure dealing with student complaints regarding evaluation disagreements/discrepancy between students and the relevant member of staff.

It is recognised that the examination system is hindered by the present legislation which allows students multiple re-examinations (up to 12), which does not support the delivery of quality education.

IMPLEMENTATION

There is adequate availability of online teaching resources prior to a lecture. However, use of electronic technology during lectures, which would enhance learning, has not been encouraged. Group work is not systematically, but only occasionally, applied throughout the curriculum. The low staff/student ratio does not allow for interaction and, therefore, an optimal learning experience within laboratory/small group/clinical teaching. The teaching is largely teacher oriented (didactic), which may be partly due to the limited reflection of staff members on their own teaching and to the lack of a culture and / or systematic institutional support for personal development of teaching skills.

The quality of course material is variable and not always updated. There was a clear link between research and the dissertation. However, this was not systematic throughout the

curriculum.

There was evidence that student mobility is encouraged during the clinical practice modules and practice placement. It is very positive that the students can choose where they would like to complete their placement. Furthermore, there is the possibility for study abroad via ERASMUS. Regarding staff mobility, there is a potential for large turnover due to the short-term contracts of external teaching staff. However, even though potential for mobility can be viewed as a positive quality, nevertheless, it does not allow for consistency and continuity of teaching.

The student questionnaire showed that students, overall, rate the teaching and course content and study material/resources as average. There are certain areas, however, where scores are poor. These areas relate to the timely provision and quality of course textbooks; the relationship between teaching units vs. workload; transparency of assessment criteria; the lack of staff availability outside of teaching hours and coursework feedback; lack of encouragement of teacher/student interaction. It is important to note that the majority of students report they do not regularly study, or attend lectures, despite not working or having other obligations. There is no evidence of a departmental policy to address these issues. However, certain aspects of the evaluation were improved based on the non-ratified updated version of the internal evaluation.

RESULTS

The teaching approach is not student-centered (i.e. not directed by learning outcomes) and, as evidenced by the student questionnaire feedback, this approach offers limited possibilities for the development of creative and critical thinking.

There is a marked discrepancy between the pass rate in the 2010 and 2012 internal evaluation reports. For example, the 2010 report demonstrates an unusually high 99-100% pass rate in a number of modules, which may indicate a lack of consistency in the marking procedure and exam content difficulty.

There was no evidence of a reflective analysis of teaching results. Such reflection can further develop and improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching both with regards to the exam content and assessment criteria.

IMPROVEMENT

The Department has identified that any teaching insufficiencies are due to the lack of staff. Therefore the only proposal made by the Department is focused on increasing the number of staff. Even though it is recognized that the permanent members of staff are limited, nevertheless, there is no initiative, or proposals, to change the function of the existing teaching procedures.

C. Research

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

APPROACH

The Department only offers an undergraduate programme of study. Even though there is evidence of research productivity comparable with similar international institutions, nevertheless, there is no defined research direction or internal standards for assessing research. It seems that research projects have an occasional character.

IMPLEMENTATION

The quality and adequacy of research infrastructure and support should not be mixed.. Even though there is only one research laboratory, it contains various “state of the art” equipment, such as optoelectronic motion analysis system, force platform, electromyographer, isokinetic dynamometer, biochemical analyser, diagnostic ultrasound and pedometer. Therefore, the research potential is acknowledged. However, there is no institutional research support (i.e. funding support secretariat, budget for internal research funding). Despite this there is research productivity as stated above. Research projects are carried out in the department via selected dissertations and collaborations with partners from national and international institutions.

RESULTS

As stated above there are no defined research objectives and direction. However, there is a significant number of scientific publications comparable to similar institutions. In the last 5 years there are 24 publications authored (or co-authored, affiliation to TEI Patras is stated) by members of staff. From these publications, 8 are first-authored by permanent members of staff, while the rest are co-authored (institutional affiliation stated), or authored by hourly employed staff. Even though the number of first-authored publications is relatively low, considering the number of permanent staff (4) and the assessed period (5 years), nevertheless, there is evidence of existing collaborations with other institutions both nationally and internationally.

The Department participates in two externally funded projects: one for students’ practical placement costs and the other for research.

The efficacy of research work was evaluated based on the scientific citations and presentations at national and international conferences. Even though no significant rewards and awards are evident in the last five years, nevertheless, the Department’s research is visible outside the Department both through scientific publications and presentation at national and international conferences. Furthermore, acknowledgment of the research outside the department is evidenced by the cumulative number of citations (80) for the above mentioned publications.

IMPROVEMENT

Improvements in research proposed by the Department include increasing the permanent members of staff and upgrading to an accredited university degree that would allow enrollment of doctoral students and associated research projects.

D. All Other Services

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

APPROACH

The Department views that the various services provided to the members of the academic community (teaching staff, students) are sufficient with regards to facilities available but limited with regards to technical infrastructure (i.e. access to e-journals).

There is no Departmental policy to simplify administrative procedures. Most procedures are not processed electronically. There is no initiative to increase student presence on Campus.

IMPLEMENTATION

The organization and infrastructure of the Department's administration (e.g. secretariat of the Department) is insufficient. There is only one secretary who acts as registrar, admissions officer, exams officer, and general administrator.

There is a library onsite with limited resources. Although there are some e-journal subscriptions students have no direct access to full text articles. Although there is a very low PC/student ratio, there is free web access available onsite.

The internal evaluation report states that there are insufficient student counselling services available. However, there is a limited psychological counselling service by an external psychologist (once weekly) and pastoral care provided by the local church.

There are no athletic or cultural activities undertaken by the Department. There is no infrastructure to support students with disabilities.

RESULTS

Administrative services are not adequate for the number of registered students. The Department acknowledges the need for increased numbers of administrative staff and insufficient student counselling services.

IMPROVEMENTS

The Department proposes an increased number of administrative staff be employed and acknowledge that this initiative needs to be supported at an institutional level. There are no initiatives for any organizational change in administration and student welfare.

Collaboration with social, cultural and production organizations

The Department has a strong collaboration with the local community which strongly supports its presence in Aigio. The local church has established a recreational centre encompassing informatics systems for the needs of physiotherapy students. The Department has also established links with the local residential care home for older adults and the school for children with special needs which allow for students' clinical placement.

The Department has provided physiotherapy services to a local football club. This collaboration enabled them to undertake at the same time a significant research project and developed a potential for a long-term collaboration that could even lead to income generation.

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

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

Please, comment on the Department's:

- Potential inhibiting factors at State, Institutional and Departmental level include the low staff/student ratio; the multiple administrative commitments by each academic member of staff; the insufficient administrative staff; limited and non-functional technical support; the lack of adequate supervision/mentoring i.e. between academic staff and students; the legislative constraints on exam format and timing and inability to have input on practice placement particularly with regards to clinical educator training and learning objectives. Proposals to overcome the aforementioned factors are to increase the number of staff and becoming an accredited university degree.
- Short term goals involve furthering the appointment process for two members of academic staff; a technical staff appointment and additional administrative support. Building refurbishment is also recommended to lower ceiling height for heat conservation. Enrichment of laboratory equipment and software is also suggested.
- Medium term goals also focus on the appointment of the two academic members of staff.
- Long term goals are identified as:
 - 1) Establishing a high level of undergraduate physiotherapy delivery course.
 - 2) becoming a reference physiotherapy centre for musculoskeletal conditions; especially chronic spinal pain and prognostic factors for painful musculoskeletal conditions (which are two main axes of research)
 - 3) organizing (either in the department or within the context of the School-«ΣΕΥΠ») a post-graduate course focusing on updated, applied evidence-based knowledge and practice in musculoskeletal physiotherapy

F. Final Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC

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

Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC on:

This is a relatively new Department and its present function is not well established. Nevertheless, it is a promising Department with potential to develop in all of the, hereby, evaluated aspects of an academic institution (teaching, research and public service). However, the success of any change/improvement will also depend on external factors. The feasibility of this process cannot be evaluated at present and remains to be seen.

The dedication and commitment of the permanent members of staff must be acknowledged and commended. However, at present there is a Departmental culture that attributes faults to external factors. The main recommendation of this committee is to change the culture to one which promotes self- and departmental reflection and proactive activity in implementing the recommendations of this report in the education, curriculum, teaching and research functions of the Department.

Curriculum:

As stated above, the curriculum is thorough with regards to content and fulfills many of the criteria set out in the WCPT guidelines and EQF framework. However, there is minimal evidence of certain critical elements such as inclusion of the ICF criteria, patient centered goals and interventions, and evidence-based practice throughout the curriculum. The implementation of an evidence-based culture within the teaching practice is fundamental for meeting the curriculum design, as intended by the WCPT and EQF guidelines, and needs to be established throughout the curriculum. Basic level teaching should promote use of the ICF criteria, patient centered goals and interventions. The department should implement early in the study programme a “how to” guide that includes critical appraisal of research, essay writing, research design and referencing. Easier access to published literature needs to be made available to the students. Students should be able to download papers from journals the Department has paid subscriptions without needing to request it each time from the librarian or being onsite for access. This would also help to further implement an evidence-based culture.

The curriculum is coherent and functional. However, learning outcomes for individual modules are not based on Bloom’s taxonomy and, as such, they are not securing progression. In addition, there are no detailed course outlines including information such as weekly lecture themes and their respective learning outcomes, examination format, and grade allocation. It is recommended that there is a separate handbook including notes for each module with a practical component. Module handbooks should include overall learning outcomes based on Bloom’s taxonomy and a suggestion is that individual lectures follow the same format. Furthermore, the module handbook should clearly state the assessment format and marking criteria. Marking criteria should be specific to the type of assessment i.e. essay, presentation, dissertation etc. References need to be updated annually. An annual course review meeting with all teaching staff, permanent and hourly employed, should be held to discuss each module and the curriculum overall which would aid in quality assurance, of which there is no documented procedure/s.

We identified that the curriculum is not student oriented; students’ evaluation needs to be included in the development of the curriculum. It is recommended that for each module a feedback form is completed annually by the students. Specific questions, with regards to the module overall, should be asked and rated (f.x., were module objectives set out clearly, contained the right amount of material, how efficient and well organised did the students perceived the delivery of the module). Similarly, with regards to lectures, practicals and seminars, specific questions should aim to monitor the students’ experience (f.x., did the specific teaching unit introduce the students to new ideas, was information communicated effectively, were they stimulating, and mean attendance). Students should also be provided with space to briefly state the positive and negative features of the module. This information can be analysed and subsequently discussed and acted upon in the course review for the new academic year.

Teaching:

A wide variety of teaching methods are utilised, which is very positive. However, a greater promotion of systematic group work would be beneficial and would help promote effective teamwork, which is an essential skill for a physiotherapist within a multidisciplinary department. Overall, there is good use of technological teaching aids but, since there is wi-fi available on site, it would be beneficial to promote the use of electronic technology during lectures to enhance the learning experience. External factors primarily increasing the

staff/student ratio would allow for better student/staff interaction and optimise the learning experience primarily in practical, small group and clinical teaching. However, the Department as a whole should aim to develop a culture for personal development and reflection of teaching skills which could include teaching days for staff members and an annual appraisal.

The student questionnaire showed that students overall rate the transparency of assessment criteria and coursework feedback as poor. The examination system requires major modifications to improve efficacy and quality. There needs to be parity between learning outcomes and assessment. A system needs to be implemented whereby exam content both with regards to the exam topic/question and the indicative answer content is peer reviewed for uniformity across years. No additional coursework options should be available. The department must develop, validate and document assessment criteria throughout the curriculum for different types of assessment (essay question, presentation, poster etc.) and these assessment criteria must be available to students for transparency. The only assessment for which clear marking criteria have been developed and are currently in use is the dissertation and this very good exception should be expanded throughout the curriculum.

Marking procedures need to be more robust and transparent, f.x., blinded where possible (i.e. essays, exam questions) and sample, or full, double marking should be implemented according to the weighting of the assessment and module (i.e. full double marking for the dissertation as is already implemented and sample double marking for each grade range for year 1 modules). Written feedback needs to be provided to students together with suggestions for improvement.

With regards to the assessment, current government legislation states that assessment needs to take place during the set examination period. This severely limits the choice of assessment methods even though it is well acknowledged in the education literature that students should be assessed using a variety of methods to develop knowledge, enhance skills and demonstrate that they can use learned theoretical knowledge to discuss and clinically reason.

Student mobility within the ERASMUS programme is encouraged and widely implemented and this is an extremely positive factor.

During practice placement (hospital, community and/or private sector, sport clubs, schools etc.) the learning experience of the students is limited by the fact that rotation to various settings is not allowed within the present legislation. In this way, although the practice placement is embedded within the physiotherapy course, and must be passed in order to graduate, it is not regulated by the TEI, since the students are treated as junior employees. As such, the practice placement is not integrated into the curriculum and learning outcomes cannot be implemented. Even though it is recognised the current practice is limited by the existing legislation, nevertheless, it is recommended that a change in the delivery of the practice placement is sought. Such change could be ideally be effected by a change in legislation.

The lack of influence of the Department on the practice placement leads to further important problems. Clinicians supervising students during their practice placement are currently not acknowledged as clinical educators and therefore not trained for that role. The lack of clinical educator training combined with the lack of assessment criteria during the practice placement can lead to a skewed deviation of grades as expected. The practice placement is a crucial aspect of the students' learning and training experience and it must promote the further development of clinical reasoning skills and reflective practice. However, the current structure does not allow for either and that limits the students' development. Although it may be challenging to change the existing culture and the role of the Department of Physiotherapy in the practice placement, this issue needs to be seriously considered. The

Department must be able to identify specific aims and goals for the practice placement that will be achieved. Alternatively, until such changes are implemented, it is recommended that clinical reasoning activities and reflective diaries are established in the curriculum as part of the clinical placements which are taught and assessed by members of staff.

An established procedure, dealing with student complaints regarding evaluation disagreements/discrepancy between students and the relevant member of staff, needs to be formulated and this procedure needs to be available to students for example on e-class.

Research

The Department's research output should be commended. It would be beneficial for the Department to develop a research policy, to become integrated into a research network and apply for research grants. The Department has the appropriate infrastructure and with modification could be upgraded to an accredited university degree which would allow for the enrolment of doctoral students and greater research output.

All other services:

We support the Department's recommendation that further administrative staff is required. There is currently only one member of staff who fulfils all administrative roles. Implementation of electronic information processing would also be helpful as most data are in hardcopy format. Wi-fi access is available onsite and this should be utilised further as discussed above. The Department should discuss with students to find solutions that would be effective in increasing their presence on campus. Longer library opening hours, direct journal access and a higher student/computer ratio may be helpful in this regard.

Collaboration with social, cultural and production organizations:

It must be emphasised that the Department has a strong interaction with the community which should be commended upon. Certain collaborations have the potential for income generation and should be explored further.

Despite the clear links between the Department and the local community further actions could be developed that could help enhance further existing interaction and students' presence on campus. These could be related to the following:

- Establishment of an "Open (public) University" organization where faculty, students and invited speakers would have the opportunity on a systematic basis (e.g. every 15 days) to present health related scientific topics to the local community. This practice will promote the dissemination of scientific knowledge to the wider community while, at the same time, allowing students to gain valuable experience in presenting evidence based knowledge.
- Formation of students' clubs of wide-ranging topics such as "photography club", "arts club", "music club" etc. It is expected that such actions would strengthen the cohesion and communication among students and also strengthen the links with the Institution they attend.
- Organization of sporting / recreational activities aiming at improving the interaction among students and enhancing the links of the institution and the local community (where permitted).
- Organization of charity events such as food collection drive, or charity gatherings / parties onsite.

Summary:

The Department as stated above is a relatively new Department. The staff is dedicated and

committed and good effort to achieve the objectives of the Department has been made. We believe the recommendations will allow for quality assurance, transparency and parity across the curriculum, which will also enhance the students' learning experience. Most of the recommendations above can be implemented internally. However some important recommendations rely on external factors, primarily government funding, or legislation, including the number of permanent staff, the set assessment period, and the inability to rotate settings and the lack of Departmental input during the practice placement.

The Members of the Committee

**TECHNOLOGICAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE
OF WESTERN GREECE
DEPARTMENT OF PHYSIOTHERAPY**

Name and Surname

Signature

Dr Stefanos Volianitis

Associate Professor, Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark

Dr George Panayiotou

Chairperson / Assistant Professor of Exercise Physiology,
European University Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus

Dr Marousa Pavlou

Academic Dept of Physiotherapy,
King's College London, London, United Kingdom