

Akkreditierungsagentur für Studiengänge  
im Bereich Gesundheit und Soziales  
Accreditation Agency for Study Programs  
in the Area of Health and Social Sciences



## **Assessment Report**

**for the Application of  
Taibah University,  
College of Applied Medical Sciences,  
Department of Clinical Nutrition,  
for the Accreditation of the Study Program “Clinical Nutrition”  
(Bachelor of Clinical Nutrition)**

On-site visit

December 12 and 13, 2022

Expert group

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Decision

February 16, 2023

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## 1 Introduction

The Accreditation Agency for Study Programs in Health and Social Sciences (AHPGS) is an interdisciplinary and multi-professional organization. Its mission is to evaluate Bachelor and Master's programs in the fields of health and social sciences, as well as in related domains, such as law or economics. By implementing accreditation and recommendation procedures, the AHPGS contributes to the improvement of the overall quality of teaching and learning. However, the higher education institutions remain responsible for fulfilling the quality assurance, too.

Since 2004 the AHPGS has been a member of the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA). In 2006, the AHPGS also joined the ENQA and became a member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) in 2009. Since 2012, the AHPGS has been a member of the Network of Central and Eastern European Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA). Starting from 2009, the AHPGS has been listed in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR).

In carrying out accreditation procedures, the AHPGS follows the requirements of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). In the present case, the decision regarding the accreditation of the study program is carried out by the AHPGS Accreditation Commission based on the following accreditation criteria<sup>1</sup>:

1. Program aims and learning outcomes
2. Curriculum design
3. Personnel
4. Facilities and learning resources
5. Study process and student assessment
6. Program and quality management
7. Gender equality and equal opportunities

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<sup>1</sup> Approved by the AHPGS Accreditation Commission

The external assessment procedure is carried out in four steps:

### **I. The University's application**

The AHPGS verifies the sufficiency of the documents submitted by the University, namely the self-evaluation report and its corresponding annexes. These are to fulfill the assessment spheres as well as the AHPGS standards. As a result, the AHPGS produces a summary (see Sections 2-5), which is to be approved by the University and subsequently made available for the expert group, together with all other documentation.

### **II. Written review**

The main documents are reviewed by the expert group assigned by the accreditation commission of AHPGS. This is done in order to verify the compliance of the study program with the above-mentioned criteria. Consequently, the experts comprise a short summary regarding the study programs.

### **III. On-site visit (peer-review)**

The experts carry out an external on-site visit at the University. During this visit discussions are held with members of the University, which include University and department administration, degree program management, teachers and students. This provides the expert group with details about the study program beyond the written documents. The task of the experts during the on-site visit is to verify and evaluate the objectives of the program and its projected study results, its structure, staff, material resources, course of studies and methods of assessment (selection of students, assessment of achievements, students' support), as well as of the program management (program administration, external assurance of study quality).

Following the on-site visit, the expert group issues the expert report. This report is based on the results of the visit, the written review of the study programs, and the documents submitted by the University. Finally, the report is made available to the University so that it can issue a response opinion.

The expert report as well as the University's response opinion – together with the provided documents – is submitted to the accreditation commission of the AHPGS.

#### **IV. The AHPGS accreditation decision**

The accreditation commission of the AHPGS examines the documentation made available in the process of application, namely the University's self-evaluation report, its annexes, the summary comprised by the AHPGS, the expert report, as well as the University's response opinion. These documents represent the basis for the commission's decision regarding the accreditation of the study program.

## 2 Overview

### 2.1 Procedure-related documents

The Taibah University delegated the task of accrediting its Bachelor study programs “Clinical Nutrition”, “Nursing”, “Clinical Laboratory Sciences” as well as “Diagnostic Radiology Technology” to AHPGS.

The self-evaluation report for accreditation (without the awarding of the official seal of the Accreditation Council of the Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programs in Germany) of the above-mentioned study programs (hereinafter the Self-evaluation report) of Taibah University (hereinafter the University) was submitted to the Accreditation Agency in Health and Social Science (AHPGS e.V.) in electronic format on February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022. The decision regarding the accreditation of a study program is carried out by the Accreditation Commission of AHPGS. The contract between Taibah University and the AHPGS was signed on June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

On June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022 the AHPGS forwarded the open questions and explanatory notes (hereinafter OQ) pertaining to the Application for accreditation for the study programs to the University. On July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2022 the University submitted the answers to the open questions and explanatory notes (hereinafter AOQ) to the AHPGS in electronic format.

The present document presents the summary of the AHPGS for the Bachelor study program “Clinical Nutrition”. The first cohort for this program was admitted in 2009.

The application documentation submitted by the University follows the outline recommended by the AHPGS. Along with the application request towards accreditation of the Bachelor study program “Clinical Nutrition”, the following additional documents can be found in the application package (the documents submitted by the University are numbered in the following order for easier referencing):

Specific documents for the study program Bachelor “Clinical Nutrition”:

Annex 01	Module Description and Overview
Annex 02	Curriculum Vitae for Instructors

Annex 03	Teaching Matrix
Annex 04	Study Plan
Annex 05	Program and Courses Specifications & Report
Annex 06	Program Tree
Annex 07	Field Experience Specification
Annex 08	Program Learning Outcome Plan
Annex 09	Employee Motivation in Healthcare
Annex 10	Internship Booklet and Evaluation Form
Annex 11	Field Experience Report
Annex 12	Field Experience Assessment Questionnaire
Annex 13	Employers Satisfaction
Annex 14	Course Outline Biostatistics & Research Methods
Annex 15	Graduation Project Booklet
Annex 16	Benchmark Report
Annex 17	Accreditation Standards for Bachelor Programs in Nutrition and Dietetics
Annex 18	Degree Certificate
Annex 19	The Guide Manual for Job Performance Management Regulation
Annex 20	Course Evaluation Survey
Annex 21	Alumni Survey
Annex 22	Operational Plan
Annex 23	Handbook of Skills Record & Skills Development
Annex 24	Executive Rules Internship
Annex 25	Internal Quality System
Annex 26	Internship Booklet and Evaluation Form
Annex 27	Workshop Report: Basic Infection Control Skills License



Annex 28	Advisory Committee
Annex 29	Alumni Survey

Alongside the study-program-specific documents, the following documents pertain to all study programs submitted to AHPGS for evaluation:

Annex A	Rules and Regulations of Undergraduate Study and Examinations
Annex B	Academic Program Preparation Handbook
Annex C	National Qualification Framework for Higher Education
Annex D	University Enrollment Guide
Annex E	Digital Transformation Program
Annex F	Admission and Registration Guide
Annex G	Quality Assurance System
Annex H	Students' Rights and Obligations
Annex I	Covid-19 Adaptions
Annex J	Directory College of Applied Medical Sciences
Annex K	Student Disability Center Guide
Annex L	Accreditation Certificate
Annex M	Handbook of Safety Instructions in Laboratories
Annex N	College of Applied Medical Sciences Strategic Plan
Annex O	Agreement letter with MOH
Annex P	System and Regulations of Higher Education Council
Annex Q	Regulations for Saudi Staff
Annex R	Regulations for Non-Saudi Staff
Annex S	Taibah University Strategic Plan
Annex T	Ethical Professional Code

Annex U	Statistics and Information Unit Report and Alumni Unit Report
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The application, the open questions (OQ) and the answers to the open questions (AOQ), as well as these additional documents, together build the basis for the present summary. The layout bears no significance, as it solely reflects the agreed standard within the University.

## 2.2. Study program

### 2.2.1 Structural data

University	Taibah University
Faculty/Department	College of Applied Medical Sciences
Cooperation partner	Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health
Title of the study program	Clinical Nutrition
Degree awarded	Bachelor of Clinical Nutrition
Form of studies	Full-time, on-campus
Organisational structure	5 Days a week (Sunday to Thursday) 8 am to 4 pm For 156 weeks Each trimester has 13 weeks Each year has 3 trimester = 39 weeks
Period of education	4 years / 12 trimesters (preparatory year included) + 1 year noncredit internship
Credit Hours (CH) according to the Credit Hour System	127 Credit Hours (equals 215 ECTS Credit Points)
Hours/CP	1 Theory Credit Hour = 1 Hour 1 Lab/Practical Hour = 2 Hours 1 Hospital Training/Field Training Hour = 3 Hours
Workload	Total: 6,140 hours Contact hours: 1,944 hours Individual Work: 2,476 hours Internship: 1,720 hours
Launch date of the study program	2009
Time of admission	Fall semester
Number of available	45 seats are open each academic year (past five

places in the program	years, while 100 seats were available in 2022 (Female only)
Number of enrolled students to date	Number of enrolled students at 2022 = 214 Number of current total students in the program = 244 Number of total enrolled students since the program launched = 705
Number of dropouts to date	60 since the program launched 4 students in 2022
Number of graduates to date	47 graduates (2022) 401 graduates since the program launched
Particular enrollment conditions	Saudi Arabian Secondary School Certificate (science section) or its equivalent; General Aptitude Test (GAT) (provided by the National Centre for Assessment in Higher Education).
Tuition fees	Free

Table 1: Structural data of the study program

### 2.2.2 Qualification objectives and employment opportunities

The vision of the University is to be an internationally recognized, comprehensive institution which is dedicated to excellence in teaching, research and community service. Therefore, it has set up the mission to contribute to society building that promotes sustainable development, knowledge economies through education, research and community partnership in a stimulating environment for learning and creativity.

According to the university, the program's learning objectives are to: (SER 1.3.2)

- gain the ability to exhibit the level of clinical competency and provision of patient nutrition care both for preventive and therapeutic health care
- be able to communicate effectively with patients and their families and healthcare team members
- be armed with efficiency and enthusiasm to record information, pursue research that contribute to advance knowledge
- be able to apply professional nutritional care plan that is evidence based and ethnically/culturally acceptable for the patients
- be able to effectively participate in nutrition researches and projects

- have distinct Islamic morals and contribute to human and cost-effective health care
- be able to initiate change, adapt to it and collaborate with other members in interdisciplinary teams
- be able to demonstrate appropriate communication, problem solving, critical thinking, leadership, management skills and an ability to lifelong learning
- discover talents, creative work and leadership qualities through student clubs activities
- be trained to think critically, learn independently and assess problems

An advisory committee was formed to design the program objectives and learning outcomes based on the National Qualification Framework (NQF) that provides five learning domains (Knowledge ; Cognitive Skills ; Interpersonal Skills & Responsibility ; Communication, Information Technology, Numerical ; Psychomotor). The program learning outcomes were built in agreement with these domains and in alignment with the university mission. These learning outcomes were approved by the university vice presidency for educational affairs. (SER 1.3.3)

The guide of the Saudi Classification of Professions, based on international classification, indicates that graduates of the Clinical Nutrition Program can work as:

- Dietician/Clinical Dietician
- Nutritionist
- Other dieticians and nutritionists

The Guideline for Professional Classification and Registration for Health Practitioners clarifies that all graduates of the program are eligible to apply for a license to practice working as a healthcare professional in Saudi Arabia after finishing the internship year. (SER 1.4.1)

According to the Saudi Commission for Health Specialists, the average population growth is 2,7% while the nutritionists to population ratio is 1 to 5000. There are 452 Bachelor's degree holders in Clinical Nutrition, under which 89% are unemployed (402 degree holders). The nutritionists licensing is recommended to be increased annually by 28%. The employment in the field of clinical nutrition is expected to grow by 11% from 2020 to 2030. The Scope

of Practice for the Registered Dietitians is also expected to be expanding as revised recently by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics 2017, which is expected to increase job opportunities. (SER 1.4.2)

### 2.2.3 Modularization and exam system

The program comprises 51 modules, out of which 31 (26 + 5 clinical courses) are obligatory (program requirement), 14 obligatory (university requirements) and 6 are compulsory optional modules. The total number is 41 modules additional to the 10 modules in the unified scientific track. There are between 13 and 17 modules in total provided for each trimester. All modules have to be completed within one trimester. The 51 modules are categorized in the following table:

<b>Number of (required/elective) modules to be completed by the students in the study program</b>		
<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Obligatory/ Elective</b>	<b>Number of modules</b>
<b>University requirements</b>	Required	<b>14</b>
	Elective	<b>2</b>
<b>Program requirements</b>	Obligatory	<b>26</b>
	Specialized Elective	<b>2</b>
<b>Free elective courses</b>		<b>2</b>
<b>Clinical practice courses</b>		<b>5</b>

The student's credit hours load per trimester can range from a minimum of 8 credit hours to a maximum of 13 credit hours. A student is allowed to register for one more course over the maximum credit hours allowed per trimester in some cases. Moreover, up to 6 credit hours can be taken during the summer trimester. As clinical practice is a key element of the program, 5 clinical practice courses are offered to the students (1 and 2 are provided at the university, while 3, 4 and 5 are provided in hospitals). These practice courses offer the chance to learn and apply the nutrition care process on hospital patients. The internship then starts after completion of the fourth year and lasts for 12 months in the faculty accepted hospitals under faculty and hospital supervision. (SER 1.2.1)

The following study plan lists the University recommended/required sequence of courses for the attainment of the degree Bachelor in "Clinical Nutrition" (Appendix 4):

<b>Trimester</b>	<b>Course Nr.</b>	<b>Course Title</b>	<b>CP</b>
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<b>First year</b>			
1st	GS 111	Arabic Language Skills (1)	2
	ENG 101	English Language Skills (1)	4
	CHEM 101	Introduction to Chemistry	3
Trimester Total			9
2nd	MATH 101	Introduction to Mathematics	3
	GS 151	University Life Skills	2
	GS 101	Islamic Studies (Faith & Worship)	2
	BIOL 101	Introduction to Biology	3
Trimester Total			10
3rd	PHYS 101	Introduction to Physics	3
	ENG 102	English Language Skills (2)	4
	GS 152	Computer Skills	2
Trimester Total			9
<b>Second year</b>			
Trimester	Course Nr.	Course Title	CP
4th	GS 102	Islamic Studies (Features of the Prophet's Biography)	2
	ANAT 151	Human Anatomy	3
	CLN 271	Medical Terminology	2
	CLN 211	Introduction to Human Nutrition	2
	CLN 213	Nutritional Biochemistry (1)	3
Trimester Total			12
5th	GS 112	Arabic Language Skills (2)	2
	PHSL 122	Human Physiology	3
	CLN 212	Nutritional Biochemistry (2)	3
	CLN 222	Food Safety	3
Trimester Total			11

6th	FE 1	Free Elective Course (1)	2
	CLN 214	Nutrition Care Process	3
	CLN 252	Clinical practice (1)	2
	CLN 218	Nutrition throughout the Life Cycle (1)	3
Trimester Total			10
<b>Third year</b>			
<b>Trimester</b>	<b>Course Nr.</b>	<b>Course Title</b>	<b>CP</b>
7th	CLN 315	Meal Planning	2
	CLN 351	Clinical practice (2)	2
	CLN 321	Food Sciences	2
	CLN 311	Nutrition throughout the Life Cycle (2)	3
Trimester Total			9
8th	GSE 1	University Elective Course (1)	2
	PHT 379	Nutritional Pharmacology	3
	CLN 341	Community Nutrition	3
	CLN 372	Nutrition and Immunity	2
	CLN 1	Specialized Elective Course (1)	2
Trimester Total			12
9th	GS 103	Islamic Studies (Human Rights in Islam)	2
	CLN 334	Clinical Nutrition (1)	3
	CLN 352	Clinical practice (3)	2
	CLN 342	Nutrition Communication & Counseling	3
Trimester Total			10

<b>Fourth year</b>			
<b>Trimester</b>	<b>Course Nr.</b>	<b>Course Title</b>	<b>CP</b>
10th	GSE 2	University Elective Course (2)	2
	CLN 431	Clinical Nutrition (2)	3
	CLN 451	Clinical Practice (4)	2
	CLN 461	Biostatistics and research methods	3
	CLN 471	Endocrine & Metabolism	2
Trimester Total			12
11th	GS 104	Islamic Studies (Islamic Values & Morals)	2
	CLN 433	Inherited Metabolic Disorders	2
	CLN 435	Enteral and Parenteral Nutrition	2
	CLN 462	Graduation Project	3
	CLN 2	Specialized Elective Course (2)	2
Trimester Total			11
12th	FE 2	Free Elective Course (2)	2
	CLN 432	Clinical Nutrition (3)	3
	CLN 452	Clinical Practice (5)	2
	CLN 442	Management of Nutrition Services in Hospitals	3
	CLN 411	Sports Nutrition	2
Trimester Total			12
<b>Study Program Total</b>			<b>127</b>



There are 30 program-specific modules as well as 3 modules provided from other study programs at the university (2 from the College of Medicine and 1 from the College of Pharmacy). In total there are 18 modules that are studied together with students from other study programs, under which 10 modules in UST and 8 modules from the university level courses (Arabic, free electives and religion).

The program coordinator ensures the providing of the course specifications to the instructor. To ensure that the objectives of modules taught from other departments meet the needs of students in this program, the following is done regularly:

- the module specifications are finalized by the offering department and approved by the Clinical Nutrition Department
- a review committee reviews all courses contents and objectives
- a continuous collaboration, coordination and consultation with other departments
- a continuous and final feedback from the course report and the students' evaluation of the course (which is typically communicated to the department via course reports)

Regarding the modules that are used with other study programs of the university, the following steps are done to organize the process:

- communication between the head of the department and the department concerned with the allocation of a teaching staff and the organization of the time schedule
- after approval, communication between the head of the department and the teaching staff to monitor the efficiency of the teaching process
- general university modules can be taken by all students of Taibah University (SER 1.2.2)

The teaching strategies used in the program are the following: formal lectures ; seminars ; Computer based learning ; Student oral presentations ; Group work assignments ; role play ; case studies ; Student focused teaching ; Problem solving ; Application of nutrition care in lab & hospital ; demonstrations & role modeling and practical classes. (SER 1.2.4)

The university initiated a “Digital transformation” which led to the launch of several platforms providing learning programs, E-library portals and administrative portals. The Blackboard platform offers for example innovative possibilities to learn like virtual classes, quizzes or virtual reality training as well as a way to communicate between students and staff. Microsoft Teams is used for meetings, workshops and classes. The V-Lab platform provides supported learning programs for students, faculty and employees. The E-library portal and the Saudi Digital Library are available for all faculty and students. The Student Academic Portal offers the possibility to manage all academic issues and requests. To finish with, the e-service portal Tik provides academic and administrative services to all university students and staff. (SER 1.2.5)

After completing the 127 credit hours of the study program, the students have to take an internship year. During this year, the students have to take training rotations in different hospitals. During the internship they are supposed to put into practice the theoretical knowledge and practical skills obtained throughout the program. It is an internship of 12 months and they have to work 5 days a week from 8 am to 4 pm. The training months are divided as follows (SER 1.2.6) :

- Mandatory rotations (48 weeks): Pediatric (8 weeks); Critical Care-Nutrition support (8 weeks); General Medicine rotation (Endocrinology [6 weeks], Gastroenterology [6 weeks], Nephrology [5 weeks], Cardiology [5 weeks]); Oncology (4 weeks); Neurology (4 weeks); Food Service (4 weeks).
- Elective rotations (2 weeks): Psychiatry and mental health; Obstetrics and gynecology.
- Evaluation of students during the internship is done by the dietitian in charge of the rotation
- Students in internship should meet their competency level based on the logbook
- Students must obtain at least 80% of the overall requirements

The clinical nutrition program was designed according to the international standards and the courses are continuously updated by highly qualified staff members. Most of the staff members have gained their qualifications from internationally acknowledged universities. According to the university, the

contents of the program are compatible to a large degree with the British Dietetic Association and the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. All specialized Clinical Nutrition courses are given in the English language. (SER 1.2.8)

There is no special agreement with other universities abroad regarding completion or sharing of the program. (SER 1.2.9)

Students learn basic research skills gradually through essay assignments during the program. Moreover, advanced courses are included in the program to give adequate research skills to the graduates. The course of Biostatistics and Research Methods prepares the students to conduct the Graduation Project which is a complete research study that has to be completed within 12 weeks. Additional approval from the Ministry of Health or the School Board can be obtained as needed. An ethical certificate is obtained from a recognized health or research institution by all students during the Biostatistics and Research Methods course. Students can also participate in staff's funded research as full-time or part-time research assistants. The university also supports student's research that is independent from the graduation project. The above-mentioned research activities are monitored by the Graduation Project Units. (SER 1.2.7)

The Clinical Nutrition Department follows the education and examination rules at Taibah University. The Educational Affairs Unit is responsible for the cooperation with the department to organize all activities related to the final exam. Concerning the number and type of modules exams, there is one midterm exam (20%), one final practical for practical courses (20%), a final theory for all courses (40%) and continuous assessment including quizzes, assignments, homework, class activity, powerpoint presentations and log book case studies (20% for practical courses, 40% for theoretical courses). The exact week of the continuous assessments has to be announced to all students at the first lecture of the trimester. Midterm exam is in week 6, final practical exams and university/general courses start at week 12 and final theory exams at weeks 13. It is possible to repeat exams in case of an absence if an institutionally approved excuse is provided. The Clinical Nutrition Program includes a practicing component which requires the students to be physically well. (SER 1.2.3)

The general requirement for a transfer of credits from other Saudi Universities are the following (SER 1.5.3):

- the University should be recognized from a higher education council
- the student should not have been dismissed from his formal university
- the student should have a GPA equal or superior to  $\frac{3}{5}$  or  $\frac{2}{4}$
- the student should have studied at least 24 CH of regular attendance in his formal university
- a justified cause for the transfer should be provided and approved by the dean of the faculty
- the student should not have studied more than half of graduation requirements
- students should have spent at least one semester in the college or department they are transferring from
- the grade of the transferred CH should not be less than C
- the student should fulfill the faculty admission criteria

In case of a transfer from other Clinical Nutrition Department at Saudi universities:

- for required modules with different contents, the transfer will be done if 75% of the contents are matching
- any module not matching will be compensated as specialized elective course or as free elective course

#### **2.2.4 Admission requirements**

Admission policies and procedures along with the requirements are listed in the "Admission and Registration Regulations" (Annex F).

The admission of students is based on the university admission criteria and is organized by the Admission and Registration Deanship. For enrollment into the Clinical Nutrition Program, the Council Committee decides on the number of students who can be accepted in each program depending on the resources and the capacity available. After finishing the unified scientific track the students apply for the program of their interest. Their acceptance is based on their grades and the amount of available places. Following requirements must be met (SER 1.5.1):

- complete Saudi higher school certificate in sciences branch or equivalent
- Saudi nationality (foreigners can be accepted under exceptional circumstances)
- high school or equivalent not for more than five years -good conduct and medically fit
- necessity to obtain the approval of his/her reference to the study if he/she works in any governmental or private entity

## 2.3. Study conditions and quality assurance

### 2.3.1 Human resources

There are 3 levels per trimester and 5 specialty courses taught to each level, which means the total of specialty courses taught per trimester is 9 to 12. Accordingly, the optimal number of faculty members required for the study program is 15+5 lecturers and teaching assistants. In total the teaching staff is composed of 9 members (3 associate professors, 3 assistant professors and 3 lecturers). 5 members are studying abroad and expected to return with a PhD degree within 6 years. Since some courses are taught by MLT (e.g. Medical Terminology) and other departments (e.g. Anatomy), the amount of teaching staff is enough to run the program.

The scope of professional instruction is as follows :

*Available staff at Clinical Nutrition Department:*

CLN staff	Number	Work-load/week specified by the university	Total work load
Professor	0	10	0
Associate Professor	3	12	36
Assistant Professor	3	14	42
Lecturer	3	16	48
<b>Total work load of the available staff</b>			<b>126</b>

52% of the courses are taught by associate professors, 40,7% by assistant professors and 8% by lecturers. Currently there are 244 students enrolled in the program. Therefore, the faculty ratio is 1:27. The department aims for a 1:10 students to faculty ratio. (SER 2.1.1)

The teaching staff is encouraged to attend workshops and seminars during the year. These workshops are organized to raise the efficiency of the academic and administrative performance and help provide a suitable work environment

for excellence and creativity. The staff is also encouraged to attend national and international conferences. The department typically helps by rearranges the lecturers and eliminate/reschedule any managerial tasks during the time of the conference. (SER 2.1.3)

The clinical experience is coordinated by the Training and Internship Unit and supervised/monitored by both the department and the hospital. A 12 months' plan is designed for each student based on students' preference and vacancies in hospitals. Head of the Clinical Nutrition Department and Head of the Training and Internship Unit are in direct contact with the internship representatives in the hospitals. Assigned staff members from the department have to plan, conduct, supervise and coordinate with Dietitian from the hospitals where the interns are placed. Regular meetings with students are scheduled to assess their progress and report any issue or difficulty experienced by students. An Internship Coordinator from the Training and Internship Unit is also designated to help in improving the experience of students during the internship training and arranges between students, department, and the Dietitian. Coordinators are assigned to the following units (SER 2.2.1):

- Academic Advisory Unit (9 members)
- Quality and data unit (previously statistics and information unit) (10 members)
- Skill Development Unit (7 members)
- Curriculum Uni (8 members)
- Alumni Unit (10 members)
- Training and Internship Unit (8 members)
- Educational Affairs Unit (14 members)
- Unit of Student Activity (7 members)
- Graduation Project Unit (9 members)
- Scientific Research Ethic Unit (10 members)
- College Website Development Unit (6 members)

### 2.3.2 Facilities

The amount of available premises is as follows :

Room no.	Assigned for	Capacity
220	Class room	55 seats
221	Class room	55 seats
254	Class room	61 seats
255	Class room	55 seats
Lab 217	Meal planning laboratory	36 seats
Lab 366	Nutrition Care Process laboratory	45 seats
Lab 363	Biochemistry laboratory	40 seats

\* Classrooms are assigned based on the number of students in each batch

The labs are equipped with all the material and devices required to deliver practical sessions. Safety instructions with pictures are provided to ensure the safety of the users. (SER 2.3.1)

The university provides no data about the total inventory and the program-related inventory of books and periodicals. However, the faculty members are asked to specify the resources needed for teaching and research. This information is then submitted to the Deanship of Libraries. The college library is open from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. Integrated and automated library software has been acquired for on campus and off campus searches and access has been provided to the universally known online databases. The e-library portal is accessible to all students and faculty members at any time. (SER 2.3.2)

The faculty has its own public-access computers. Security systems are in place to assure the privacy of sensitive personal and institutional information and to protect against externally introduced viruses. Each classroom and laboratory is supplied with accessible computer terminals for students and data shows. Moreover, Wi-Fi is available in all university facilities. (SER 2.3.3)

Research groups are provided with financial support for the establishment of research laboratories and for the supply of the required equipment and research materials. Research support is offered to new faculty members, undergraduate and graduate students. To encourage the publishing in well-recognized journals, researchers who publish in ISI journals receive an award ranging from 10 to 30% of their salary based on the rank of the journal in addition to a post-publication bonus. Research initiatives are continuously established to support research projects that address current issues. The researchers are supported by the deanship of Scientific Research the following

way: with the University Scientific Excellence Prize ; with research centers facilities and with the Taibah University Initiatives. (SER 2.3.4)

### **2.3.3 Quality assurance**

The university follows the quality concept and regulations of the National Center for Academic Accreditation and Evaluation (NCAAA) after it got accredited from 2019 to 2026 by the NCAAA. This means all sectors from the university have to be committed to its quality assurance standards. The Taibah University has set up a quality assurance system (Ejadaa) to assure that the quality measures and rules provided by the NCAAA are performed. The colleges apply the internal quality system through inculcating the best practices related to the educational process and research, following up and evaluating their application as well as locating strengths and weaknesses according to which action plans are developed so as to improve the performance according to standards of the adopted academic accreditation commission. The Quality and Date Unit at the College of Applied Medical Sciences requests faculty members in all departments to submit a course report by the end of each trimester for every course delivered to students, including a section for assessing the course instructor. (SER 1.6.1)

The quality assurance system Ejadaa has been set up to ensure that all colleges and programs perform all quality measures and rules provided by the NCAAA. The quality measures of the study program are integrated into that of the entire university through two cycles, course report cycle and program report cycle. The Quality and Data Unit includes members from all three departments who (SER 1.6.2):

- address all questions and concerns related to the quality system in the department
- review the course reports
- prepare for accreditations
- ensure the delivery of a high quality teaching

All course instructors are required to follow the approved course's specifications. Students fill the evaluation form of the courses at the end of the trimester. Course coordinators analyze the course outcomes based on students' grades, teaching staff comments and course evaluation surveys.



Based on this information the course coordinator recommends an action plan to the program coordinator in order to improve the course learning outcomes and to overcome the difficulties and issues faced by the students. (SER 1.6.3)

The practical relevance of the study program is specifically evaluated through the internship Experience Survey to be used in the Field Experience Annual Report, through the Alumni survey and through the college designed questionnaire of the employers' satisfaction on the graduates' performances. The Statistics and Information Unit analyzes the results and evaluates the related key performance indicators (KPIs). Feedback is also obtained from the reports written by the stakeholders (employers, hospital trainers of interns and head of the hospital and health center departments). Another feedback is collected from the Advisory Committee at the college and program level during meetings. The Data Management Office at the University collects the data and shares the result with the college at the beginning of each academic year. The results are sent to the Vice-Dean of the College and the head of the quality and data unit who then evaluate the practical relevance and consequently implement an action plan. (SER 1.6.4)

The students are supposed to take between 8 and 13 credit hours per trimester. They can have a minimum of 8 credit hours and a maximum of 13 hours per trimester (6 hours for summer courses). In some cases a student can register for one more course over the maximum credit hours allowed per trimester. Lower workload can be approved for students with special situations. (SER 1.6.5)

The enrollment analysis for the cohort of students admitted in 2018 and graduated in 2021 is as follows (SER 1.6.6) :

Years	3 Years Ago 2017-2018 *UST	2 Years Ago 2018-2019	1 Year Ago 2019-2020	Current year 2020-2021
1. Total cohort enrollment	-	45	40	35
2. Retained till year end	-	44	35	34
3. Withdrawn	-	1	5	1
4. Cohort graduated successfully	-	44	35	34
5. Total graduated successfully	-	44	35	34

\* Unified scientific track

The university has an electronic system providing all information about the study program, the requirements and the regulations. Grievance procedures

can be applied on the platform. An introduction week is organized at the beginning of every year at college level to give all information and rules. There are no specific regulations on compensation measures for students with disabilities. (SER 1.6.7)

An orientation program is provided to newly admitted students at the university and college level. The Counseling Services Unit has academic, psychological and social professional mentors counseling students through individual meetings, group counseling services or therapeutic interventions. All students are linked with an academic advisor from the department faculty members who is there to assist the students facing academic or non-academic difficulties. The advisors also help with the registration or dropping of courses and keep an eye on the student situations and performances, especially by students with low GPA (lower than 2). Office hours are allocated in the timetable of each faculty member (4 hours per week) and announced to students. If the allocated time is not suitable, the students can arrange an appointment. The academic advisor has to follow up absences, course withdrawals, study postponements/suspensions, academic warnings, transfers, suspensions, expulsions and visiting students. In the case of an academically troubled student, the academic advisor submits a report on the status of the student which is then analyzed by the Academic Guidance Supervisor. The university also offers a student-to-student mentoring program (the Guide Friend). (SER 1.6.8)

The program currently includes only females. The university offers support for students and their families. A student who does not exceed the duration of the program scheduled for graduation and who has a GPA of no less than 2 receives a monthly financial reward of 1000 Saudi Riyals. Every Saudi student who has a GPA of 4,5 for 2 trimesters for one year gets a financial reward of 1000 Saudi Riyals. A nursery is available for mothers. Students also get a special discount at the children's day care, available from 7am to 4pm on weekdays (Sunday to Thursday). Health care services are provided for all students and their children at the Medical Center of Taibah University during all academic years. Prescribed medications can be provided by the pharmacy on campus. All services are completely free of charge. The Deanship of Student Affairs also provides housing, nutritious meals, social care and support through the Student Fund program, the Financial and the Award

programs. To help students maintain a healthy lifestyle, sports competition and cultural or social activities are offered. (SER 1.6.9)

Taibah University is working toward providing a barrier free environment for physically challenged students. The Taibah University offers a full scholarship with no tuition fees to all accepted students. Students accepted into the Clinical Nutrition program are assigned by the Admission and Registration Deanship based on grades and physical health. Data concerning the health status of these students are provided to the university by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, which include presence of any disability (if any) and type and severity of the disability. (SER 1.6.10)

## **2.4. Information about the University**

The Taibah University was founded in 2003 by merging the two branches of King Abdulaziz University and Imam Mohamed bin Saud Islamic University in Madinah. There were more than 60000 students enrolled in 2020. The University has 23 active colleges and 139 active departments and offers 120 undergraduate and graduate programs. From the 23 colleges, 15 are located on the main campus while the 8 others are in Yanbu, Al-Ola, Khaibar, Hnakiyya and Badr. The University has a total of 153 buildings with 208 student labs, 67 research labs, 17 research centers, 163 computer labs and 15 university libraries.

In order to improve the quality of education, the Ministry of Higher Education has set up 8 strategic goals to align with the 2030 vision in higher education. Taibah University has aligned its strategic planning with the national vision and already achieved projects, for example the NCAAA institutional accreditation and the digital transformation initiative. (SER 3.1.1)

The Faculty of Applied Medical Sciences currently has 3 departments:

1. Department of Medical Laboratories Technology

2. Clinical Nutrition Department

3. Department of Diagnostic Radiology Technology

The Clinical Nutrition Department was opened to female students in 2009/2010. There are 114 female students enrolled in the Clinical Nutrition Department in fall 2022. The overall revision of the study program and

modules was started in 2020 depending on previous courses and program reports as well as on students and stakeholders surveys and other evaluation procedures. There was also a restructuring initiative of the university administration and subsequently a restructuring of the college administration (SER 3.2.1)

As part of a national initiative, led by the Saudi Arabian ministry education, all Saudi Arabian public universities are moving from a semester system (2 semesters per academic year) to a trimester (3 trimester per academic year). As demonstrated in the table below, the number of weeks dedicated for teaching per trimester are to be changed from 15 to 12. To compensate for the change in the number of weeks per trimester, the duration of a single lecture will be increased from 50 to 60 minutes, whilst the duration of practical sessions will be increased from 100 minutes to 120 minutes per session. It is however, important to highlight that this change has just been applied in the beginning of this academic year (28<sup>th</sup> of August 2022).

	Semester system	Trimester system
Number of semesters per year	2	3
Number of teaching weeks per semester	15	12
Number of weeks dedicated for exams	2	1
Overall duration of a semester (weeks)	17	13
Duration of a single lecture (min)	50	60
Duration of a single practical (min)	100	120

According to the University, this change will not affect any of the related accreditation criteria nor standards. Rather, the proposed changes will allow the transition from a semester system to a trimester system without impacting the program learning outcome, nor program's study plan, as program administrative teams have rearranged courses over 12 level rather than 8 levels for 4-year programs.

### **3 Expert report**

#### **3.1 Preliminary remarks**

The Accreditation Agency in Health and Social Sciences (hereinafter AHPGS) was commissioned by Taibah University (hereinafter the University) to accredit the study program "Clinical Nutrition" (Bachelor of Clinical Nutrition).

The on-site visit evaluation of the study program "Clinical Nutrition", as well as the study programs "Nursing", "Clinical Laboratory Sciences" and "Diagnostic Radiology Technology" offered at the Taibah University, was carried out on December 12 and 13, 2022 at Medina, Saudi Arabia.

The documents of the University, the feedback from the experts to the documents and the results of the discussions with the representatives of the University during the on-site visit serve as a foundation for the statements made in the Expert Report.

The following experts were appointed by the Accreditation Commission of AHPGS for the evaluation of the study program:

##### **Prof. Dr. Dr. Anja Bosy-Westphal**

Christian-Albrechts-University Kiel, Germany

Institute for Human Nutrition and Food Science

Head of the Department of Human Nutrition

Spheres of professional activity: clinical nutrition and dietetics

Vice president of the German Society for Clinical Nutrition, member of the

German Obesity Society (DAG) and the German Society for Diabetes (DDG)

##### **Dr. Mathias Maximilian Dilger**

Albert-Ludwigs-University Freiburg, Germany

licensed physician and currently student of dentistry

##### **Prof. Dr. Johannes Keogh**

Fulda University of Applied Sciences, Germany

Professor of Nursing Sciences

Former program leader for Nursing at the Faculty of Nursing and Health at

Fulda University of Applied Sciences

Research and science in Nursing, Nursing Education, Public Health,

Preventive Care and Health Promotion

Qualification as nurse, midwife, community nurse and in psychiatric patient care

**Prof. Dr. Gerd Mikus**

Ruprecht-Karls-University of Heidelberg, Germany

Professor and former Deputy Medical Director of the Department of Clinical Pharmacology and Pharmacoepidemiology at the Ruprechts-Karls-University of Heidelberg

Deputy head of the Ethics Committee of the Landesärztekammer Baden-Württemberg, Member of the Expert Committee of controlled substances of the Federal Ministry of Health, Germany

**Prof. Dr. Waldemar Zylka**

Westphalian University, Campus Gelsenkirchen, Germany

Professor of Physics, Medical Engineering and Medical Physics at the Faculty of Physical Engineering

Dean of the Study Program "Medical Radiology Technology" (Bachelor of Science)

Founding member of the Westphalian Institute of Health

Member of the Germany Physical Society (DPG), Germany Society of Biomedical Engineering (DGBMT)

According to the Rules for the Accreditation of Study Programs and for System Accreditation (determined by the decision of the Accreditation Commission, of December 8, 2009 in the version of February 20, 2013, Drs. AR 20/2013), the task of the experts in the accreditation procedures is to evaluate the education concept of a specific study program as well as to estimate the possibility of its successful implementation. This concerns, in particular, qualification objectives of the study program, its conceptual integration into the system of education, the concept of the study program, feasibility of the content and scope of studies, the examination system, study-relevant collaborations, personnel, material and space resources, transparency and documentation, application of the results of quality assurance for further development of the study program (it is especially important to present the analyses and evaluation results of student workload, academic accomplishments and employment of graduates, which are to be documented and taken into account within the framework of continuous development of the study program), as well as the provision of gender equality and equal opportunities.

The on-site visit of the experts is carried out in accordance with the “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area” (ESG), established by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). After the announcement of the accreditation decision, the expert report will be published as a part of the Final Report.

### **3.2 Basic information about the study program**

The main objective of the Bachelor study program “Clinical Nutrition” offered at the College of Applied Medical Sciences of Taibah University is to provide the community with scientifically and skillfully nutritionists and dietitians through a stimulating educational and research environment that contributes to the development and service of the community.

The study program requires the obtainment of 127 credit hours (CH) according to the internal credit hour system. One credit hour is equal to one contact hour of lectures, two hours of lab/practical hours and 3 hours of hospital training/field training hours per week. The program applies the University’s internal credit system. Thus, students’ performance is evaluated based on the results of a Grade Point Average (GPA) and the Cumulative Grade Point Average (cGPA). GPA is calculated by dividing the sum of the grade points (with 5 being the best achievable grade and 0 being the worst) received in all courses registered during one semester by the total credits received from all courses a student has completed since joining the program by the sum of the credit hours of these courses. According to the University regulations, students with a GPA of at least 2.00 are considered to have successfully completed the respective course. To successfully complete the whole program, students have to pass all obligatory examinations with the minimum grade of 2.00 cGPA score.

The total workload of the program constitutes of 6,140 hours, of which 1,944 hours are contact hours, 1,720 hours are training/internship hours and 2,476 are hours of independent study. It is a full-time study program with a regular duration of 4 years/12 trimesters plus one year of rotary internships. As part of a national initiative led by the Saudi Arabian ministry of education, all Saudi Arabian public universities had to move from a semester system to a trimester system. Therefore, the number of weeks dedicated for teaching per trimester were changed from 15 to 12. To compensate for the change in the number of

weeks per trimester, the duration of a single lecture was increased from 50 to 60 minutes, whilst the duration of practical sessions was increased from 100 minutes to 120 minutes per session. This change has been applied in the beginning of the academic year 2022.

The program curriculum consists of 51 modules, out of which 10 are mandatory courses taught in the preparatory year and 41 modules are program-specific.

Admission requirements of the program include a general school certificate or an equivalent document not older than 3 years as well as an Aptitude Test Certificate (ATC) administered by the National Center for Assessment in Higher Education. Upon completion of the study program, students are awarded with the academic title "Bachelor of Clinical Nutrition".

The average students' intake is 45 students per year. Admission takes place every September. The first batch of students has been admitted to the program in the academic year 2009/2010. Up to now, 401 students have graduated from the program. The main language of instruction is English. No tuition fees are charged to Saudi nationals. Students also receive monthly governmental stipends until they graduate.

### **3.3 Expert Report**

The on-site visit was carried out on December 12 and 13, 2022, according to the previously agreed schedule. Representatives from the head office of AHPGS accompanied the expert group.

The expert group met on December 11, 2022 for preliminary talks prior to the on-site visit. They discussed the submitted application documents and the results of the written evaluation as well as questions that had been raised. Furthermore, they prepared the plan of the on-site visit at the University.

During the on-site visit, experts conducted discussions with the University management, representatives of the College of Applied Medical Sciences, the Chair, Vice Chair and the teaching staff of the program "Clinical Nutrition" as well as with students currently studying in the program. Furthermore, they inspected the learning premises, such as lecture halls, seminar classrooms, library, and computer classes. Moreover, experts had the opportunity to see the equipment and the capacity of the laboratories.



The expert report is structured in compliance with the international accreditation criteria from AHPGS which are based on the “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area” (ESG), established by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). The study program will be described and analyzed in a comprehensive manner below. The documents submitted by the University, the experts’ feedback to the documents, the observations made during the on-site visit, the results of discussions with the representatives of the University, and members of the Faculty of Applied Medical Sciences serve as the foundation for the statements made in the expert report.

### **3.3.1 Program aims and their implementation**

Taibah University is one of the biggest universities in Medina region and aims to be an internationally recognized, comprehensive Saudi university dedicated to excellence in teaching, research and community service. To achieve this vision, the University has set up a strategic plan with the following directions:

- 1) Excellence in teaching and learning
- 2) Utilizing research & graduate studies for community development
- 3) Building active partnership with the community
- 4) Continuous improvement of administrative & financial management
- 5) Diversifying income resources
- 6) Creating an appealing & inclusive environment
- 7) Enhancing university ranking nationally, regionally & internationally

During the on-site visit, the experts inquire about the university's internationalization strategy. The university management reports that collaborations with France, the UK, and other countries are planned and partly already implemented. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education has also set up a "Human Capability Development" program, which will make it easier for international students to study in Saudi Arabia in the future. Among other things, a so-called "academic visa" is to be introduced to make the visa process much easier for foreign students. Furthermore, full scholarships for international students are planned. As a consequence, the admission regulations (e.g. being Saudi national) are going to change, which the experts positively acknowledge. The experts welcome these developments and are convinced that the commitment and engagement are given, as many of the

faculty completed their master's degree and PhD programs abroad, which brings nationals in contact with other research strategies and a broader spectrum of experiences from which the University might profit. From the experts' point of view, the assessment of the Bachelor study program "Clinical Nutrition" according to international standards was also an important first step.

The experts further inquire regarding the research strategy at Taibah University as well as within the "Clinical Nutrition" program. The experts gained the impression that research as a topic seemed to be deemed very important for all faculty as well as students involved in the study program. The experts learned that there are already plans for the implementation of a master's program at the College of Applied Medical Sciences within the Clinical Nutrition department to further expand the research activities. The experts take a positive note of the vision and strategic development plans. As they were not visible in the provided documents, the experts recommend to present the vision of the College and the department more actively, as this will make it more attractive for future students and could also open career paths for students seeking future positions such as managers or even teaching staff. The experts believe that healthy and sustainable nutrition as well as food security is a major challenge of our time, which is why interdisciplinary education and research using a food system approach covering not only public health but also food science, agriculture and economics is needed. The real strength of nutritional sciences is the prevention of diseases. A master program could fill this gap and provide a highly topical and timely response to the challenges that we face in our modern societies like the increasing rate in obesity, diabetes and exploitation of natural resources. Together with a PhD program this would strengthen the further development and international recognition of clinical nutrition as an integral part of the College of Applied Medical Sciences. Furthermore, the urgency for completing the University Hospital was mentioned by all stakeholders involved. From the experts' point of view, this would also open up future research possibilities, especially within the master's program. Therefore, the completion of the teaching hospital should be pushed. Lastly, in order to enhance the research skills of students in the "Clinical Nutrition" program, the experts recommend implementing a bachelor thesis as a final proof of academic competencies.

The Bachelor program "Clinical Nutrition" pursues specific qualification objectives. The program's goal is to prepare students to develop the ability to assess, plan, implement and provide proper nutrition therapy for patients according to their needs and health conditions. The graduates shall be able to work as dietitians/clinical dietitians or nutritionists.

The learning objectives of the "Clinical Nutrition" program are based on standards within the national qualification framework for Saudi Arabia developed by the National Center for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA). The five domains namely are knowledge; cognitive skills; interpersonal skills and responsibility; communication, information technology, numerical; and psychomotor. The experts confirm that the study program focuses on specific qualification objectives. These objectives cover professional and interdisciplinary aspects and particularly refer to the domain of academic competences, competences necessary for a qualified employment, skills of social commitment and personal development. The experts inquire about the poor employment rates that emerge from the graduate surveys. The university reports that these result from poor response rates. The reviewers recommend that the university evaluates tools to increase survey response rates.

From the experts' point of view, the requirements of this criterion are fulfilled.

### **3.3.2 Structure of the study program**

The Bachelor study program "Clinical Nutrition" is a full-time study program with a regular duration of four years / 12 trimesters plus one year of rotary internships. The curriculum consists of 51 modules, out of which 31 (26 + 5 clinical courses) are obligatory program requirements, 14 are obligatory university requirements and 6 are compulsory modules. Furthermore, 10 modules are to be absolved in the preparatory year.

The first year of the study program aims to familiarize students with the academic environment and set the foundation for the further courses with topics like English language, university life skills, natural and related science. Also, students absolve courses like Arabic language and Islamic culture. These courses are shared between all students of Taibah University. In total, there are 18 courses within the "Clinical Nutrition" program which are shared with other colleges like the College of Medicine, College of Pharmacy and the

College of Nursing. Furthermore, the teaching staff reports on collaborations on the research level regarding graduation projects, where the students have the chance to work in interdisciplinary teams. The experts take positive note of the interdisciplinary collaboration between the health-related study programs at Taibah University. The experts see the planned teaching hospital also as a great opportunity to intensify interdisciplinary cooperation among students and teachers.

After the first year the students begin to have courses specialized for the "Clinical Nutrition" program. Firstly, students learn about all the basics needed in the following two years via several introductory courses (e.g. Medical Terminology, Nutritional Biochemistry, Nutrition Care Process, Meal Planning, Clinical Placement 1& 2). By the end of the first year, students become familiar with the basic physiology and metabolism of the human body, they are trained to be able to perform anthropometric and nutritional assessment, efficiently read and interpret the nutritional biochemical tests, calculate the nutritional and caloric requirements for healthy individuals, and design a simple meal/menu. In the second year, students take more courses related to the applications of nutrition in clinical settings, as well as courses related to nutrition and immunity, food drug interaction and they also start their first hospital rotation. By the end of this year, students are expected to manage patients with single medical problem/condition, e.g. diabetes, anemia and obesity. They are also expected to acquire basic communication skills required to deal with inpatients and outpatients in dietetic clinics. In the final year of the program, several core courses are being taught at this level which are: Enteral and Parenteral Nutrition, Clinical Nutrition 2 & 3, Sport Nutrition. In addition, students in this year learn about research methods and biostatistics. The graduation project is also taken in the final semester. By the end of this year, the students are expected to gain good nutritional knowledge and skills to manage patients in critical situations, including critically ill children and adults, patients who require tube feeding or parenteral nutrition. They are also expected to gain good research skills, including reading scientific papers, evidence-based practice, conducting scientific research, and writing scientific manuscripts.

Practical skills are gained during the clinical courses as well as the mandatory internship year which must be completed after the four years of study. During

the internship the students work on a full-time basis (52 weeks, 5 days/week, 8 hours/day) at local or regional governmental and private hospitals. The experts appreciate that during the internship students are supervised from both sides, the academic coordinator as well as the clinical instructor to ensure that the objective of the clinical training is met. All interns and supervisors are guided by the policies and procedures contained in the 'internship logbook'. Furthermore, the 'internship and clinical training unit' is responsible to coordinate and facilitate the students' training process between the College of Applied Medical Sciences and the affiliated hospitals. The University ensures that the internship is also regularly evaluated by the students, stakeholders as well as the clinical instructors. If there are any difficulties during the internship, the responsible staff within the "Clinical Nutrition" program are assisting the students in solving the problem or even shifting the internship place. This is also verified by the students, which the experts positively acknowledge.

Furthermore, the experts acknowledge the very detailed course files with its contents and aims, which allows a high level of transparency. In the experts' opinion, the structure of the curriculum seems to make the workload manageable (*see also criterion 'admission and feasibility'*).

From the experts' point of view, the requirements of this criterion are fulfilled.

### **3.3.3 Admission and Feasibility**

The admission policies and procedures along with the requirements are properly documented and made publicly available. Admission requirements include:

- Saudi higher school certificate in sciences branch or equivalent (not older than five years),
- Saudi nationality (foreigners can be accepted under exceptional circumstances)
- Candidate should not have attained a high school or equivalent for more than five years.

As the first year of study comprises medical foundations as well as basic knowledge in university life and communication skills to compensate deficiencies from secondary school, the experts determine the admission

procedure and requirements to be appropriate. They correspond to the standards of the study program.

The experts draw attention to the relatively high number of exams to be passed during the “Clinical Nutrition” program. The University states that the system of midterm and final exams is determined by the government. In order to prepare students for the level of difficulty and volume of exams, the type as well as the time of the different examinations is defined and communicated to the students transparently at the beginning of each course. The experts confirm that the University takes measures to guarantee the feasibility of the study program despite the high workload. The organization of the education process ensures the successful implementation of the study program.

On site, it became obvious that the teaching staff follows an “open-door-policy”. In the first week of each year, students undergo an orientation which familiarizes them with available support services and where the colleges and departments are introduced. The experts positively highlight that senior students are also involved in organizing the orientation week and guiding the new students.

As another support mechanism, an academic advisor is responsible for a small number of students from the beginning of each semester. Students are supported through advisors, course coordinators or personal tutors with their registration process, selecting a study program, financial and personal issues and their performance during the semester. If the students have problems besides academic issues, they are supported by a social support unit that is installed at the University. The experts find the support services at the University to be exemplary and conducive to the health and success of the student body.

From the experts’ point of view, the requirements of the criterion are fulfilled.

#### **3.3.4 Examination system and transparency**

The University uses a continuous assessment process to ensure the quality of education for its students. This is achieved by evaluating the performance of the students through a series of exams and quizzes that are scheduled during the academic trimesters. Students in the “Clinical Nutrition” program are not required to write a Bachelor thesis. Instead they have to conduct a research

project called graduation project. Students will choose their supervisor based on the topic of the graduation project, which also needs to be approved by a committee. The experts positively highlight that specific workshops regarding the presentation and finalization of the graduation project are offered. The evaluation of the graduation project is done by presenting a poster or a dissertation. All of the graduation projects are presented during a research day at the University. Usually, there are four to six students responsible for one graduation project, which can also be done at hospitals or other institutions. The experts understand that this is also the mean difference compared to a Bachelor thesis, where the students have to apply simple research methods by their own. As already stated in *Criterion 1*, the expert recommends to establish a thesis instead of the graduation project as this is also internationally more recognized.

Furthermore, the students are encouraged to write research proposals, papers and give presentations. The University presented a range of initiatives which should help the students to be interested in research and also take part in writing and publishing papers, which the experts positively acknowledge.

In the experts' opinion, the study program includes a very high number of exams which causes a high workload not only for students but also for the teaching staff. The transparent information of examination methods and of the examination schedule at the beginning of each term makes the great number of assessments during and at the end of each trimester manageable. An examination can be repeated once. Students who cannot attend the test due to health issues or other unforeseen circumstances are allowed to take the test on another agreed day. If the examination is failed twice, students must redo the course in the following semester. Thus, the experts conclude that the examinations, although numerous, serve to determine whether the envisaged qualification objectives have been achieved or not and are focused on students' knowledge. The requirements to students' performance in examinations are regulated and published. The frequency of examinations, as well as their organizations, is appropriate.

During the round of talks, the University reports on an electronic exam system introduced at Taibah University as part of a digital transformation in 2019. This enabled the university to maintain its course of studies as far as possible even during the Corona pandemic. Through the digital transformation system all of

the course information as well as academic support mechanisms, e.g. add and drop courses or academic advising are provided. The University also offered training programs for students and teachers to get familiar with e-learning, which the experts positively acknowledge.

From the experts' point of view, the requirements of this criterion are fulfilled.

### **3.3.5 Teaching staff and material equipment**

The "Clinical Nutrition" program is carried out by 3 associate professors, 3 assistant professors and 3 lecturers. Considering the total of 9 currently enrolled students, the student-to-faculty ratio is 1:27. The experts address the high supervision ratio compared to the other study programs as well as the low number of teaching staff. The University explains that 5 members are currently studying abroad and expected to return with a PhD degree within 6 years. The experts welcome this, but believe that the motivated and dedicated teaching team should be relieved sooner by additional staff. Especially with regard to the development of a master's program and the activation of the male branch, the program would benefit from additional expertise in food science and public health nutrition.

Regarding the employment process, the qualification and experience of the teaching staff is closely evaluated prior to the appointment decision. Overall, the teaching and academic staff of the College of Applied Medical Sciences shows a very high level of commitment and potential for the execution as well as further development of the study program they are responsible for. The expert group concludes that there is a strong corporate identity and positive group dynamics among the University and faculty administrations.

The teaching staff within the Bachelor program "Clinical Nutrition" is in possession of academic and technical credentials and experience adequate to their responsibilities. The University informs its employees about opportunities for personal and professional development in clear ways, and actively encourages their participation in workshops, training courses and conferences intended to further their ability which is confirmed during the talks with the staff on site. New teaching staff is thoroughly briefed about the program and their teaching responsibilities before they can start working. Students evaluate the performance of all teaching and other staff periodically.



On-site, the experts were shown around the College of Applied Medical Sciences' premises at the campus as well as the skills labs, where students within the "Clinical Nutrition" program gain their practical skills. The experts were satisfied with the quality of the laboratories and clinical areas used to train students in the Bachelor program "Clinical Nutrition". The laboratories consist of a meal planning laboratory, a nutrition care process laboratory as well as a biochemistry laboratory. According to the experts, the skills labs are equipped with all relevant devices and simulators. It was ascertained by the experts that the Bachelor study program "Clinical Nutrition" has ample available teaching facilities at its disposal. Nevertheless, the experts believe that the skills labs should be complemented by a teaching kitchen. Such a facility can be used as a catalyst of enhanced personal and public health across medical, community, school, and corporate settings. A teaching kitchen is an educational, interactive space to meet the needs of the campus community in areas of nutrition education, food insecurity, culinary skills, and community engagement. It could also serve as an interdisciplinary learning space with medicine students and students of the "Clinical Nutrition" program following the curriculum of culinary medicine. In addition to using the laboratories for the practical courses, the experts recommend using external cooperation opportunities even before the internship, on the one hand to get to know current equipment and on the other hand to evaluate the opportunities of the labor market.

The central library of the University is located on the main campus building. The library offers a collection of study and research material for clinical nutrition student. The total number of printed materials related to clinical nutrition in the central library is 181 items. In addition to the central library, the department of "Clinical Nutrition" has its own 'small library' containing nutrition and medicine specific books and learning material. The total number of printed materials related to clinical nutrition in the internal library is 51 items. Electronic library is available for all students. The University deanship of library affairs manages the central library and its branches, as well as the electronic library. The college library opening period is currently from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm.

The experts state that the learning resource materials and associated services are consistent with the requirements of the programs and the courses offered by them.

From the experts' point of view, the requirements of this criterion are fulfilled.

### **3.3.6 Quality assurance**

The University follows the quality concept of the National Center for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA) from which Taibah University has recently got full accreditation for seven years until 2026.

According to the experts, Taibah University has a well-structured system of quality assurance spread across all its units. The University has established a quality assurance hierarchy which connects from the deanship to quality to all colleges and study programs. The quality assurance measures of the "Clinical Nutrition" program are divided in two cycles: The course reports are gathered by the course coordinators at the end of the trimester and submitted to the head of the department. The head of the department then reviews all reports and thereafter prepares the yearly program reports, taking all key performance indicators (KPIs) into consideration. All reports are discussed during the departmental board meeting along with the marks and grade distribution. The student evaluations of the individual courses are discussed to list the most important improvement and strength points. The results of this board meeting are then used to prepare an action plan for the next year and to improve the program. The experts conclude that the University has a well-established, documented and published concept of quality assurance regarding the education process, teaching and research, which serves as the basis for the quality-oriented development and implementation of its study programs and, therefore, also for further development of the "Clinical Nutrition" program. As the University states during the on-site visit, the student council meetings at the program level also play an important role in the evaluation of the "Clinical Nutrition" program, which is confirmed by the students.

The results of the internal quality assurance management are applied to the continuous development of the study program. In doing so, the University takes into close consideration the quality evaluation results as well as the analysis of students' workload, their academic accomplishments and feedback from graduates as well as other relevant stakeholders.

From the experts' point of view, the requirements of this criterion are fulfilled.

### **3.3.7 Gender equality and equal opportunities**

The Taibah University demonstrates its commitment to the provision of equal opportunities for all students, within the cultural boundaries of the local society and shows openness for diversity and social developments. In general, the College of Applied Medical Sciences provides equal admission, education, examination and participation opportunities for both groups of students. In the "Clinical Nutrition" program, currently only female students are admitted. The "Clinical Nutrition" program for male students as well as the facilities are already available, but not activated due to lack of teaching staff and interested male students. Therefore, as already stated, the experts recommend allocating the necessary resources to activate the program for male students and implementing appropriate advertising measures to reach sufficient prospective students.

A nursery is available at the campus, where students get a special discount on child day care. The university counseling center helps students with special living situations. It was founded in 2012 and includes academic, psychological and social mentors and offers individual and group counseling service as well as therapeutic intervention. Furthermore, the medical center provides free health services to the students and their families. The experts positively emphasize the handling of students with chronic illnesses and/or disabilities. Prior to admission, a medical examination will be conducted and an interview with the academic council and admission committee will be held to discuss whether the student can be admitted to the program. The University has implemented the student disability center. The accessibility of the campus was assured on site. It was well noted that the University was also able to immediately give examples of students benefiting of the support program for disabled or chronic diseased students.

From the experts' point of view, the requirements of this criterion are fulfilled.

### **3.4 Summary**

The experts sum up that the overall impression of the Taibah University is very positive. The experts welcome the internationalization plans in KSA and at Taibah University. Research motivation at the university can also be further

strengthened with the help of the development of master's degree programs and the completion of the teaching hospital. Digitalization at the university is working well and is positively noted by the experts. The University presents itself convincingly as an open-minded and dynamic institution with willingness to import new ideas and recommendations for further enhancement.

A number of additional favorable characteristics and achievements of the study program "Clinical Nutrition" were demonstrated by the management of the University, the representatives of the College of Applied Medical Sciences, those of the departments as well as of the study body, such as a strong commitment to quality assurance and a very well-functioning support mechanism system. Moreover, the experts highlight the thorough and comprehensive curriculum of the study program. Hence, the objectives meet the requirements of the current job market of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Based on the information from written documents and the results of the on-site visit, the experts conclude that the study program "Clinical Nutrition" offered at the Taibah University fulfills the above-described criteria. Hence, the experts recommend that the Accreditation Commission of AHPGS makes a positive decision regarding the accreditation of the study program.

For the continuous development of the study program, the experts have outlined the following recommendations:

- The University should present the vision of the College of Applied Medical Sciences and the Department of Clinical Nutrition regarding implementing a Master study program more actively.
- Tools to increase alumni survey responses rates should be evaluated.
- The completion of the teaching hospital should be pushed and the resulting opportunity to intensify interdisciplinary cooperation among students and teachers should be utilized.
- A bachelor thesis as a final proof of academic competencies should be implemented.
- Additional teaching staff with expertise in food science and public health nutrition should be hired.
- A teaching kitchen as an educational, interactive space to meet the needs of the campus community in areas of nutrition education, food

insecurity, culinary skills, and community engagement should be implemented.

- In addition to using the laboratories for the practical courses external cooperation opportunities should be used even before the internship, on the one hand to get to know current equipment and on the other hand to evaluate the opportunities of the labor market.
- The necessary resources to activate the program for male students should be allocated and appropriate advertising measures to reach sufficient prospective students should be implemented.

## **4 Decision of the accreditation commission**

### **Decision of the Accreditation Commission of February 16, 2023**

This resolution of the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS is based on the application, as well as the expert review and the on-site visit covered in the expert report.

The on-site visit of Taibah University took place on December 12 and 13, 2022 according to the previously agreed-upon schedule.

The accreditation decision is based on the "Accreditation Criteria for International Program Accreditation" which have been developed in close accordance with the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" (ESG), established by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

The Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS discussed the procedural documents and the vote of the expert group.

The regulated study period in the program "Clinical Nutrition" is four years / twelve trimesters + one-year internship (not credited). The study program requires the obtainment of 127 credit hours (CH) according to the internal credit hour system. The study program consists of 51 courses out of which 10 courses are absolved during the unified scientific track and 41 are study program specific. The language of instruction is English. The bachelor study program "Clinical Nutrition" is completed with awarding of the academic degree "Bachelor of Clinical Nutrition". Admissions take place every fall semester. The first batch of students was admitted to the study program in the academic year 2009/2010.

The Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS considers that all Accreditation Criteria are fulfilled and adopts the following decision:

The study program "Clinical Nutrition" is accredited for the duration of five years, until September 30, 2028.

For further development and enhancement of the study program, as well as of the University as a whole, the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS supports the recommendations articulated in the expert report. Additionally, the Accreditation Commission recommends to translate the internal credit

hour system into the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and attach it as an appendix to the diploma to ensure international compatibility.