Accreditation Report

Field of Health Sciences

University of Akureyri

January 2008
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1 Introduction

1.1 The Expert Committee
Professor David Hawkins, Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario, Department of Pediatrics, University of Ottawa, Canada, Chair.
Mrs. Margaret Lane, Former Associate Dean of Students, City University, Institute of Health Science, London, UK.
Professor Raimo Hiltunen, Dean of the Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Helsinki, Finland.

1.2 Liaison Officer

1.3 Terms of Reference
The Expert Committee was appointed by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture of Iceland to review applications for accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (HEI) within the field of Health Science, and as stipulated in the Higher Education Act, number 63/2006, cf. rules on the accreditation of HEI according to article 3 of the Higher Education Act, No. 63/2006, No. 1067/2006.

The committee was directed to receive all applications for accreditation for Higher Education Institutions within the field of Health Science after September 3rd, 2007. The role of the committee of experts is to review applications and subsequent information on the basis of the National Qualification Framework of Iceland and Rules On Accreditation of HEI No. 1067/2006. These were provided to the expert committee and its liaison officer.

The committee was directed as follows:

The review shall include the results of evaluation using criteria’s laid out in article 2 (3) (A) – (i) in the rules of the following factors:

- Objectives and roles
- Administration and organization
- Organization of teaching and research
- Personnel qualifications requirements
- Admission requirements and student rights and obligations
- Teacher and student facilities and service
- Internal quality system
- Description of study according to learning outcomes
- Finances
The review shall further evaluate the following, cf. Article 3 of the rules:

- Expertise and competence in the field of study and the subdivision therein with a view to the quality of teaching and research and the appropriate facilities the dissemination of knowledge and in service to society.

- The cooperation and support of the university towards the field of research, teaching staff and experts in any particular field. The appropriate measures for the education and training of its students.

- Special attention to fields of research and any subdivision therein. Cooperation between undergraduate and graduate studies and any other appropriate expertise.

- The status of fields of study subdivisions therein on a national and international comparison with view to the cooperation with other HEI’s and other institutions/organizations nationally and internationally in that particular field of expertise.

The committee was directed to submit a written report before January 1st 2008. Its evaluation was to be supported by detailed and objective reasoning, and shall also include recommendations for accreditation of the specific field of study within the applicant institutions. Further it was stated that the committee will have assigned to it an assistant from the Icelandic Centre for Research in Reykjavik who will serve as a secretary and editor for the group (letter to the Chair from the Minister of Education, Science and Culture dated Reykjavik 03.05.2007).

1.4 Working Method

The members of the expert committee received comprehensive information from the University of Akureyri (UNAK) through the liaison officer in the form of a CD-ROM. This information was also available on a website, however, this was not as readily navigable as had been hoped; however the CD was more than adequate for the purpose. In addition, for the application for accreditation itself, the documentation was supported by a number of appendices. A list of these is attached, along with the itinerary for the onsite visit.

The expert committee was directed to review the application from the Faculty of Health Sciences which included programmes in Nursing, Occupational Therapy and The Diploma/MSc programmes in Health Sciences.

The members of the expert committee met for the first time in an informal setting on the evening of Sunday, October the 14th 2007. The following day the committee spent at RANNIS discussing the conduct and content of the accreditation surveys and agreeing on a modus operandi. It was clear from the beginning that the areas of expertise represented by members of the expert committee did not cover all those to be evaluated during the site visit. Committee members came from the fields of medicine, nursing and pharmacy but did not have particular expertise in occupational therapy. Since the primary purpose was to evaluate the educational program and related matters such as research, this was not felt to be a significant problem.
It was agreed that members of the committee would take the lead in discussions in their particular areas allowing that any member of the committee could participate in any of the interview sessions. This worked out quite well.

There proved to be relatively little free time during the survey of the two Universities (Akureyri and Iceland) however, a full day was made available for discussion among the committee and with the liaison officer on Friday, October the 19th 2007. The major objective of this meeting was to reach a consensus on the committee’s findings and recommendations and this was accomplished without significant difficulty. It was agreed that the full accreditation survey report would be a joint project among the three members of the expert committee and that the liaison officer would act as a coordinator and her office would be a central repository for drafts of the report.

1.5 Evaluation of the work process

The expert committee worked well together. The assistance of Dr. Rebekka Valsdottir from RANNIS was invaluable. It was apparent right from the beginning that the itinerary was extremely busy and compressed and that keeping on time was going to be critical. In order to achieve this, the team split up when visiting the clinical facilities affiliated with UNAK. Furthermore, the schedule was probably somewhat ambitious and it was necessary to decompress it on short notice. Dr. Rebekka Valsdottir was extremely helpful in facilitating these changes, which of course were not easily arranged.

2 Roles and Objectives

Health Science programmes have been running at UNAK since 1987 when the first nursing programmes were established. The Faculty has been under constant development during the past few years. Studies in Occupational Therapy were first on offer in the autumn of 1997. Currently 284 students are registered with the Faculty.

Since 1997 studies in Occupational Therapy have been offered alongside nursing programmes. The curriculum reflects the needs of the community and commissions arise from hospitals and professional organizations. It is based on national and international predictions on health needs and the development of health services and reflects the academic ethos found in Europe in particular as well as incorporating the wider North American and Australasian principles. This makes the programmes offered recognizable by other Nursing and Occupational Therapy professional bodies.

UNAK Faculty of Health Sciences now offers students three academic areas of specialization: nursing and occupational therapy at bachelor’s level and Diploma and M.Sc. in Health Sciences.

According to the Strategy of the Faculty of Health Sciences at UNAK 2007 - 2011 five key objectives have been identified on the path to successfully achieving the future vision of the University. This includes providing a positive and challenging learning environment which embraces dynamic research activity. Active interaction with society is another key objective alongside international cooperation. An efficient management structure is integral to meeting all the objectives.

A positive and challenging learning environment is a prerequisite to attracting students and to the faculty’s continuing development. This was evident in the expert
panel’s visit where students were seen utilizing the learning opportunities. Students attending a meeting with the expert panel were very praiseworthy of their learning environment. Of particular note was the distance learning facility. In a university situated in a relatively remote location this is an essential development and new technology is incorporated in its delivery of the curriculum.

Research is the foundation of any university and it is important to increase research activity of the academic staff of the faculty of Health Sciences. The target stated in the faculty of Health Sciences strategy is that 50% of the teaching staff or specialists at the faculty should have achieved a PhD by 2011. Further, the number of academic articles published in Icelandic and foreign peer-reviewed academic publications should increase by at least 30%. The team plans to increase student numbers involved in research-based programmes by 20% and to increase revenue from faculty research activities to at least 50% of the faculty’s total revenue by 2011.

One of the objectives of the Faculty of Health Sciences relates to knowledge acquisition and transfer and to distil it into society. Collaboration between the University and the local community is evident in the projects developed within the University, hospitals and communities. Discussions at staff and student meetings illustrated the range and depth of collaborations. It was pleasing to hear that the relationship with businesses in the local community is very productive and to date students are always able to develop research projects related to their health science studies.

Productive international cooperation and international recognition is a measure of a university’s quality. It is the aim to increase reciprocal student and teacher exchange projects up to 2011. A partnership with at least 5 foreign universities should be established and the Faculty of Health Sciences should be actively participating in research in two defined areas of Health Sciences by year end 2011.

The University of Akureyri Faculty of Health Sciences is fully committed to adoption of the Bologna process and has set target objectives to achieve this. Staff and students are aware of the rationale and developments involved with this process. Faculty staff reported to the expert panel an increase in workload for developing the new curricula when implementing this process but feel it is more balanced now. They reported that the challenge of embracing new ways of working has been a positive experience on the whole.

Conclusions
Based on the Accreditation application of the University of Akureyri and the site visit, the opinion of the Expert Committee is that the University of Akureyri function and goals have been set down in good accordance with Article 2 of the Higher Education Institution Act No. 63/2006. The opinion of the Expert Committee is that the Application for Accreditation of Nursing and Occupational Therapy meets the requirements.
3 Management and Organization

The University of Akureyri (Háskólinn á Akureyri) is located in north Iceland and has served Akureyri and its rural surrounding area since it was founded in September 1987. Then the Faculties were two, i.e., the Faculty of Health Sciences and the Faculty of Industrial Management. Now the University is divided into four Faculties; the Faculty of Business and Science, the Faculty of Education, the Faculty of Health Sciences, and the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences. The number of students is around 1400 and members of staff are 180.

The Rector of the University is Dr. Þorsteinn Gunnarsson. The governing of the University is in his hands as well as the University Council’s and the Faculties.

3.1 Administration

The University Council wields supreme decisive authority within the University and is in charge of matters concerning the University in general and shapes a comprehensive policy for it. The University Council also contributes to and organizes supervision of and cooperation amongst Faculties and their communications with parties outside the University, including cooperation with other schools and research institutes. The University Council has decisive authority in matters relating to the university, as prescribed by law and as regulation more specifically stipulates. A seat in the University Council is held by the Rector of the University, one representative appointed by the Minister of Education, two representatives of teachers hired by the University on an indefinite appointment basis, and one representative of the students. Council meetings are held once every month and advertised in the University Calendar of Events on the University’s web pages.

The Management Board supervises coordination of daily operations of the University. The Management Board meets at least once a month and consists of the Rector, Faculty Deans and the Managing Director of the University Office.

A Quality Council is operated within the University and seats there are held by the Rector, Deans of Faculty, the Managing Director, the Director of Quality Management, and a representative from the staff and the students. The Quality Council meets at least once a month and information on its role and members can be accessed from the webpage.

The University Office holds meetings once a month and a seat there is held by the Managing Director, the Directors of the service units and the Director of Quality Management. Further information on the office can be found on the webpage.

Faculty Council deals with matters relating to individual students, their registrations, studies and advancement. The Faculty Council meets once a month during term. A seat in the Faculty Council is held by the Dean of Faculty who is Chair, his alternative, Heads of Departments, two representatives of the teachers and one representative of the students. The faculty Office Manager is present and writes minutes of the meeting. The Faculty Council minutes are considered public records and presented to the staff of the faculty at Faculty Meetings.

Faculty Meeting constitutes the highest decision-making authority within the Faculty of Health Sciences. The Faculty Meeting deals with the most important aspects of the operation of each Faculty. The Faculty Meeting may decide that a special Faculty
Council should deal with specific matters relating to the Faculty in question. An example of Faculty Meeting duties that are not transferable is its role by law to give its opinion on applicants for the post of Dean of Faculty. The Faculty Meeting is also a forum for discussions of matters that are of concern for the whole faculty. On average the Faculty Meeting is held twice in a semester or four for the whole school year. The Faculty Meetings are attended by all tenured teachers, the staff of the Institute of Health Sciences of the University of Akureyri, representative of temporary instructors and two student representatives.

The Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences is Dr. Hermann Óskarsson. The Dean is, on behalf of the Faculty Meeting, the chief administrator with regard to the operation of the Faculty in question and it is the dean who leads strategy formation within the Faculty.

The Rector appoints Deans of Faculties for a term of three years after seeking the opinion of the faculty in question and consulting the University Council. The position is to be advertised. Applicants for the position of Dean of Faculty must fulfill the general qualifications required of university teachers, specializing in the disciplines that are either taught in the respective faculty or closely related to its main operation.

3.2 Continuing Education at UNAK

The Continuing Education at UNAK seeks to offer comprehensive continuing education and re-education at the university level, with a view to the needs of customers and economy of operation as guidelines. Emphasis is placed on the acquisition of specialists in each field to man teaching positions. In the planning of courses/study, cooperation is exercised with numerous individuals in industry, within companies, institutes and associations. Most of the courses will be in UNAK academic disciplines associated with health and social sciences, pedagogy and education, management, finance and operations.

3.3 Collaborating Institutions

For years it has been emphasised and encouraged at UNAK to cooperate closely with other institutions and utilize their expert knowledge. UNAK has signed contracts with the District General Hospital (FSA) in Akureyri, Landspítali University Hospital and the rehabilitation institute Reykjalundur. The Institute of Health Sciences of UNAK is an example also of cooperation between the University and the FSA which entails the hiring of teachers and staff at both institutions.

3.4 Conclusions

Based on the Accreditation application of the University of Akureyri and the site visit, the opinion of the Accreditation Committee is that the University of Akureyri meets the requirements for governance and administration stipulated in Articles 15 and 16 of the Higher Education Institution Act 63/2006 at institutional, faculty and departmental levels.
4 Arrangements for Teaching and Research at UNAK

UNAK operates in four Faculties, i.e. the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences, the Faculty of Health Sciences, the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Business and Science. Courses are assessed in standardized units (ECTS); a full course of study is considered to be 30 ECTS units per semester or 60 ECTS units per year. The courses of study have been organized to meet the Guidelines for Higher Education and Qualifications.

Every autumn new students are welcomed to the University with an invitation to take part in a special programme for a week. During this week students will receive practical information on the University and on their future studies. The programme is called Students Success Week as it is believed that students who participate improve their chance of success with their studies.

4.1 Teaching Assessment

Teaching assessment takes place at the end of each semester and then all students are given opportunity in a web survey to assess the quality of the courses they have taken and the performance of the teachers. Information gathered from students on their courses is regarded as highly important as the University strives for better quality and is therefore one of the pillars of the quality management system.

4.2 Distance Learning

The University has for years been a leader in distance learning in Iceland. About half of the current student population is distance learners and students attending phase structured studies. In distance learning courses the emphasis is on students forming local groups and enjoying the services of continuous education centres which partly substitute the services and facilities provided for students in Akureyri.

4.3 Research Administration

The Research and Development Centre of UNAK (RHA) oversees research administration for the University, as well as various research-related projects. The research administration manages applications for research and training leaves, applications for research- and project grants, as well as point rating of UNAK staff. The research administration also has an informative role, and this includes counseling on the writing of grant applications to research funds.

4.4 Research Funds

UNAK employees have the option to apply for grants to various funds, both inside and outside the University. Funds within the University are the University of Akureyri Research Fund, the KEA University Fund and the University of Akureyri Project Fund.
4.5 Health Sciences

The field of Health Sciences at the UNAK has defined its position in an international context in a report entitled “The Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Akureyri, Professional Collaboration with Foreign Institutions”. In it the Faculty submits information on student exchange, teacher exchange, cooperating universities, networks and bilateral agreements. Information on the cooperation of teachers in the Faculty is also submitted.

4.6 Practical Study

Students in the Faculty of Health Sciences receive substantial practical training. Clinical training in nursing begins in the first year, is conducted on many sites around the country for a total of 24 weeks. On-site training in occupational therapy takes 25 weeks in total and starts at the end of year 1. In order to guarantee training positions at the country's leading health institutions, the Faculty of Health Sciences has signed cooperation contracts with Landspítali – University Hospital in Reykjavík, Reykjalundur Rehabilitation Institution SÍBS in Mosfellsbær, and the District General Hospital in Akureyri.

The BSc Nursing and Occupational Therapy are 120 credits (240 ECTS) four year programmes leading to registration as a nurse or occupational therapist. These are structured as 30 credits (60 ECTS) per year divided in fall and spring semesters.

The BSc Nursing is also available as a distance learning programme of the same duration and academic credits and is accessed increasingly by Icelandic students. The Faculty was specifically complemented by The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (2001) for the contribution to nursing in sparsely populated areas.

The first distance learning group graduated from UNAK’s Faculty of Health Sciences on the 17th of June 2002. These programmes fit within the European Credit Transfer System. The standards that students must fulfill on completion of their study are in accordance with the criteria the Ministry of Education has decided and are defined in the criteria for higher education and degrees.

Since 2005 and in accordance with the Bologna process the students of UNAK graduate with a Diploma Supplement. The Diploma Supplement is meant to make it easier for students to explain to other universities, especially universities abroad, the standards they had to fulfill to complete their degree.

There are currently 175 nursing and 55 occupational therapy students registered on these programmes. Graduation outputs have been relatively stable over the past 4 years and retention appears very good.

The Faculty also offers a Diploma (30 credits) and MSc (60 credits) for those with a BSc in health sciences or related discipline to further their studies.

4.7 Conclusions

Based on the Accreditation application of the University of Akureyri and the site visit, the opinion of the Accreditation Committee is that the University of Akureyri Faculty of Health Sciences have arranged both teaching and research according to requirements defined in Article 2, paragraph 3, of the Higher Education Institution
Act 63/2006. The Expert Committee supports accreditation of all programs described in part 8.

5 Personnel Qualifications and Requirements at UNAK

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Positions</th>
<th>Research Positions</th>
<th>Staff Number</th>
</tr>
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<td>Professors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Associate Professors</td>
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<td>Assistant Professors</td>
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<td>4,55</td>
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<td>Adjunct Lecturers</td>
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<td>0,70</td>
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<tr>
<td>Part Time Teachers</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest Professors</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Docs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialists and Specialist Staff</td>
<td>0,5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Staff</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An appraisal of the nursing programme at the Faculty was commissioned by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and completed by an outside assessment team in May 2001. One of the issues raised in the report was the educational status of the teachers of nursing in the Faculty of Health sciences. It is encouraging to see that the ratio of teachers who have completed a master’s degree and/or a doctorate has increased substantially. Approximately 97% of the permanent teachers at the faculty have attained a master’s degree and/or a PhD (more than 35% have completed a doctorate). Two of the permanent teachers will complete their doctorates in the fall of 2007.

Some of the Faculty’s permanent teachers are not in full time employment with the Faculty, but work part time at cooperating institutions in the field of health. The Faculty views these teachers as an important asset, as they strengthen the ties between the academic community, the students and institutions and companies in the field of health. The same applies to the part-time teachers at the Faculty who work in this field. This was seen as strength by the Faculty staff and sessional teachers. Many live some distance from the University but with modern technology can work from a number of locations and are able to support the students on their placements too.

However, teachers reported that they needed to be independent workers able to use their own initiative and learn rapidly how to work in the Faculty. It is challenging at times to fill vacancies and this has inhibited opportunity for staff to make good use of the sabbatical leave opportunities. Staff were very keen to support colleagues and take on extra work to facilitate this so that there was an equity of opportunity at most times for staff development.

Courses for nursing clinical instructors have increased and have been held once a year since 2001. These used to be one-day courses, but are now (2006-2007) offered at a master’s level for the first time. Teachers from UNAK, FSA and the University of Iceland took part in these 10 ECTS courses. This is especially important for ensuring student preceptorship and mentoring is of the standard required by the University. The
project manager for clinical studies was a key connection between the University and Clinical placement circuit. Students evaluation of the workplace was used by practice to inform changes and revisions as needed.

Occupational Therapy field work sites were monitored by the course leader and students were given 1:1 supervision on placement. There is a one day course for clinical instructors new to the responsibility as well as updates for existing staff.

The Occupational Therapy profession is small in Iceland numbering 180 people in total. There is an enhanced relationship which ensures placements meet student’s individual needs. The Faculty has a good relationship with the Association of Occupational Therapists as reported by graduates at their meeting with the expert panel. The Faculty offers a special programme to upgrade those with the Diploma in Occupational Therapy to the BSc level.

The expert panel met students, tenured teachers, and graduates and all were extremely positive about the cohesive and supportive working relationships in the Faculty. This was said to relate to size, location and opportunity for much immediate interaction so that any issues could be aired and usually resolved satisfactorily in a speedy manner.

Conclusions

Based on the Accreditation application of the University of Akureyri and the site visit, the opinion of the Accreditation Committee is that the University of Akureyri meets the requirements for personnel qualifications as stipulated in Articles 17 and 18 of the Higher Education Institution Act 63/2006.

6 Admission Requirements and Student Rights and Obligations at UNAK

Anyone who has completed a matriculation examination (stúdentspróf) from an Icelandic junior college or an equivalent examination can apply to become a registered student at the University on the payment of a registration fee.

However, according to the HEI Act. No. 63/2006, the University Council is authorized to permit the registration of other students who have equivalent experience and knowledge, on condition that the Faculty concerned considers the students’ level of preparation adequate for undertaking the planned course of study.

The University Council has the final power of decision with regard to student intake. The Council can also restrict the number of students commencing their studies at Faculties of the University in accordance with regulations it may impose.

The University Council shall, after receiving proposals from Faculties, confirm regulations with regard to student registration in individual Faculties, including further details with regard to registration conditions in each Faculty. The registration of new students is generally conducted in June. Master programmes (level 2) students are usually registered in April each year. The registration of students who seek to be transferred from foreign universities shall be completed before 1st of May.
6.1 Students’ Right to Appeal

In the wake of the passing of a new law, HEI Act no. 63/2006, UNAK has started revising all its internal rules and regulations in accordance with the law. The University Council passed new Regulations of the University of Akureyri no. 466/2007 30 April 2007. These regulations constitute the frame for the governance of the University and add details to the Law on the University of Akureyri no. 40/1999. Regulation no. 466/2007 specifically contains substantial rules for the organization of the University but in article 2 paragraph 4 it is pointed out that “during the processing of cases and decision making on behalf of the University, qualified members of staff are obliged to adhere to the law, sound administrative practice, equality and other objective points of view.” This is a reference to the fact that university governance must be in accord with administrative law. The regulations also allow for the University Council to pass further regulations on specific topics such as codes of conduct, student assessment, quality control and, last but not least, the rights and obligations of students.

Based on Article 33, the Rector may admonish a student or expel him from the University, temporarily or permanently, in the event that the student has been in breach of the regulations of the University. Specific conditions, case procedures and the student’s right of appeal are described in an Act of Parliament relating to the University.

The University Council sets further rules regarding the rights and obligations of students at the university, comprising an outline of proceedings and avenues of appeal for the students.

Rules on the rights and obligations of students have not been passed yet but they are being prepared and Article 20 of the Law of Administration will be taken into account in these preparations and formations of the rules. Attached is a draft of the code of conduct for students. The University Council agreed to establish a committee to perform this work and compose codes of conduct for teachers and ethical rules for scientific research. These drafts have not been widely discussed but the hope is that they will be complete at the end of 2007 and come into effect from the start of 2008.

6.2 Health Sciences

There are special rules in force for competition examinations (numerus clausus) at the end of the first term of studies for the baccalaureate degree in the Faculty of Health Sciences. Each year the University Council decides on the number of those who are allowed to go on to the second term in nursing studies and occupational therapy upon receiving the proposal from the Faculty.

The system of numerus clausus used at this Faculty has a long established history and is linked to meeting the aspirations of the Government and Health services in Iceland. This does create tension for students in meeting the required criteria and for some it results in cessation of study. At UNAK the intake numbers are such that the credit point for cessation is higher than that at University of Iceland. Whilst this relates to contractual numbers it is seen as unfair by students and inequitable. One of the suggestions put forward for consideration is selection prior to entry to programmes such as employed in other countries. It is also recommended that the percentage rate for success be the same for both universities.
6.3 Health Science, M.Sc.

The conditions for being accepted to study for an M.Sc. degree, diploma or for particular courses in health science are as follows: A student who has completed a baccalaureate degree in health science and related fields with a first degree from an accredited institution can apply for graduate studies in the Faculty of Health Sciences. The study leads to a master’s degree (120 ECTS units) or a diploma degree (60 ECTS units) in health science. The Study Council is required to assess for each student whether the first degree is sufficient for the graduate study. The Study Council can accept exceptions from the general conditions for being accepted when particular courses are being applied for. Registration for particular courses depends on the agreement of the supervisory teacher. After examination by the Study Council the University Council decides if they are accepted.

Admission for advanced Diploma and M.Sc. studies uses the following standard for applicants: A student, who has completed a baccalaureate degree in the area of Health Sciences and related studies normally with a first class rating from an accredited university institute, can apply for advanced study at the Faculty of Health Sciences. The Council of Studies is to determine each time whether the composition of the first university degree ensures a solid enough foundation for the programme of advanced study. The Council of Studies can grant an exemption from the general conditions of admission in cases of individual courses. Enrolment in individual courses is to be subject to the approval of the supervisory teacher of the course in question. After having been dealt with in the Council of Study, applications are attended to by the University Council.

6.4 Conclusions

Based on the Accreditation application of the University of Akureyri and the site visit, the opinion of the Accreditation Committee is that the University of Akureyri fulfils the purpose for admission requirements and student rights and obligations stipulated in Articles 19 and 20 of the Higher Education Institution Act 63/2006 and in accordance with the Administration Act No.37/1997.

7 Facilities for Teachers and Students and Services Provided

The University Office attends to all services to students and teachers. The University Office was created after the organizational changes in Spring of 2006, when all services to students and employees were consolidated under the direction of a managing director appointed upon implementation of the changes. The University Office is divided into 5 sections, each of which has its own director. The University Office and its subdivisions provide services and general facilities for students and staff of the University.

The expert panel was shown a number of the teacher and student facilities at the Faculty of Health Sciences and viewed them as excellent. Staff and students in their respective meetings reported that the learning resources met their learning needs.

In a meeting with graduates of the Faculty the expert panel heard of the perceived benefits of the programmes. These included developing maturity, self-confidence, and
new perspectives on life itself through reflection on a constant and continuing basis. Graduates exited with a strong sense of professional identity which was realized when they entered the workplace. Graduates felt they were unaware of this before completion of studies. They now considered that their knowledge was at the cutting edge, up to date and modern, and they knew that there were continuing professional development opportunities available to them to maintain this. Graduates considered that the professional learning process started when they qualified but that they were well prepared to take this forward. Their basic practice, achieved through their education, was said to be very good and this was supported in feedback given in their workplaces, especially when compared with graduates from other universities in Iceland and further afield.

Information flow was very constructive with the use of information technology resources. However, the key aspect was easy and instant access to Faculty staff including the department head that ensured issues were addressed at an early stage. Graduates would urge the increase in manual handling skills training for nursing students as the only change they would propose to course content.

The students rated highly the learning community they had in the Faculty stating that staff knew them by name, they responded in a timely fashion and that their study was flexible and personalized where necessary. The Occupational Therapy students considered the presentation to each other carried out as part of their programme increased their confidence greatly. The Nursing students felt that this was an aspect they would benefit more from in their programmes. They reported many assignments due in around the time of examinations and suggested that smaller volumes of course work with presentations to peers such as in Occupational Therapy would enhance their study.

Occupational Therapy students would like to see Faculty staff use more clinical examples from their professional discipline in teaching sessions as there was a tendency to relate theory more too nursing than occupational therapy. All students indicated that the high workload close to their examinations was a challenge that might be explored more. However the graduates said that even though the programme was hard this was its very strength that gave them a market edge in their view.

Conclusions

In the opinion of the Expert Committee, the University of Akureyri provides services, facilities and working conditions to teachers and students in the field of the Health Sciences of a sufficient standard to enable the fulfillment of the roles and objectives of the institution.

8 Internal Quality Management

In February 2005, the Ministry of Education entrusted the IMG Consultation Agency (IMG) with the task of conducting an administrative assessment of UNAK, the purpose of which was to analyze the activities and operations of UNAK. The assessment was designed to analyze the strengths and the weaknesses of the University so that work could be done to further its development. In October 2005, IMG prepared a report of the assessment for the Ministry of Education, Science and
Culture. The result of the assessment concerned, among others aspects, the quality of the management systems applied at UNAK. Concerning the quality of the management, the report summarizes as follows: “No single individual has been responsible for management quality whilst policy emphases in this field have been weak. The University quality control system requires reinforcement. Here policy formation is required, a comprehensive quality system must be introduced and management and coordination must be equipped with an efficient process. The University is aware of deficiencies in this field and has therefore recently established a work group whose role is to establish a comprehensive quality management system and prepare a three year plan.”

A letter dated on 27th October 2007 from the Ministry to the Rector of UNAK states that UNAK has achieved outstanding results in the past years and that the university is characterized by power, ambition and competitive thinking. However, detrimental features are mentioned that deserve improvement. In the letter, there is also advice for the quality management: “University quality management requires measures of restraint – the shaping of a policy on quality, introduction of a comprehensive quality system and examination of the administration and coordination of departmental quality performance.” Further, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture states that “in accordance with rules on the quality supervision of university teaching, the Ministry also requests the University to submit to the Ministry and publish before the 1st of February 2006, a report in writing on how the University proposes to react to the advisory points disclosed in the report of the party conducting the assessment.”

In January 2006, the Rector of the University answered the Minister of Education, Science and Culture concerning the items and suggestions disclosed in the letter from the Ministry, dated 27th October 2005. The Rector announced, that in March 2005, the University Council approved the organizational changes that altered the name of the information service to information and quality management services whose Director received defined responsibilities in the field of quality management. A working group was also appointed, whose role was to recommend a comprehensive quality management programme for all units and institutes of the University and prepare a three year project plan. The quality management programme will extend to the self-evaluation of the University, work on internal improvement, and its foundation will be the University quality management policy. The working group is on the verge of completing its work and the quality management programme will subsequently be introduced and work will be launched according to the three year plan. In addition, the Rector states that there is preparation underway aimed at defining the assessment of courses as an important factor in the internal assessment, quality management and improvement in all university faculties.

In May 2007, the Rector released an overview of action taken following the IMG institutional assessment of UNAK carried out in 2005. The overview describes the status of all the operations which were to be done according to proposal for action given by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in October 2006, including the status of arrangements for the quality management system.

On 25th of May, the University Council approved the Quality Management System (QMS) of UNAK. The QMS covers all activities of the University, viz., teaching, research, governance, support and institutes. The QMS was commissioned by the Quality Council (Regulation of the University of Akureyri no. 466/2007, 3 April 2007) which is composed of the Rector, Faculty Deans, Managing Director, Director
of Quality Management, one representative of employees and one representative of students. The main principle in planning the QMS was that all people within the University, students and employees, are responsible for the quality of its operations and have defined roles in the plan of operations that aims at constant quality improvement. The QMS is in accordance with the standards and guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area and the Higher Education Institution Act 63/2006 and it also fulfils the demands stipulated in the National Qualification Framework for Iceland (Chapter 3.3.). The Quality Management Methodology is also in good accordance with the strategic goals (until 2011) of UNAK.

The Rector is in charge and assumes final responsibility for the University’s quality management system but daily supervision of its operations is in the hands of the quality management director. It is taken for granted that all employees of the University are responsible for its quality and participate actively in the quality management effort. Thus, the Faculty Deans, the managers and heads of sections are the quality directors of their units; however, each and every employee is ultimately responsible for the quality of his or her own work.

According to UNAK, this quality management system will be fully implemented by the spring semester of the year 2008. After the full implementation of the QMS, the quality assurance in UNAK will be of a very high international standard.

Conclusions

Implementation of the Bologna process has been under way since 2000 including the adaptation of the quality assurance system based on the criteria set out in the Berlin communiqué (2003) with a high degree of co-operation and networking.

Based on the Accreditation application of the University of Akureyri and the site visit, the opinion of the Accreditation Committee is that the University of Akureyri has management methods and procedures for internal quality assurance needs in accordance with Articles 11 and 12 of the Higher Education Institution Act 63/2006.

9 Description of Learning Outcomes

The lines of study within the University of Akureyri are defined in accordance with the criteria of the Ministry of Education for higher education and degrees.

Study lines are offered for baccalaureate degrees (level 1) and master’s degrees (level 2). Students can also complete shorter lines of study for diplomas at level 2.

A full time study for a baccalaureate degree at the Faculty of Health Sciences is usually a four year course of study (240 ECTS). Full time study for a master’s degree is usually a two year course (120 ECTS).

A full time student’s work is defined as 30 ECTS a term, 60 ECTS a year. According to the definition of The European Credit Transfer System one ECTS credit corresponds to 25-30 hours work and reflects all the student’s work. Full time study is between 1500 - 1800 hours study a year. Credits can only be obtained for those courses that students complete successfully.
The Faculties of the University are responsible for teaching, the organisation of teaching and the award of degrees. To complete each course students must fulfill the requirements about knowledge and skill demanded. Information on the standards the students must fulfill is to be found in the curriculum of the university. There is also information on the learning outcomes that students must obtain to complete their course of study and be awarded a degree in each field.

The standards that students must fulfill on completion of their study are in accordance with the criteria the Ministry of Education has decided and are defined in the criteria for higher education and degrees.

The University’s curriculum describes the structure of the study in all departments and all lines of study offered to new students each year. The curriculum applies to the students registered that year and progress in their study naturally. The academic administration receives the curricula from the faculties and puts them in place. In the curriculum there is general information on courses and the structure of the lines of study. The curriculum contains the names and numbers of each course and a short description of it and a definition of the learning outcome the students ought to have mastered upon completing the course. Also, there are defined preconditions for some courses and the main components of assessment.

An overview of the courses for each academic year is to be found in the course catalogue in accordance with the curriculum. There is information on each course in the course catalogue and on the supervisory teachers, assessment and readings in the course concerned and what language is being used.

The supervisory teacher is expected to hand out the syllabus describing the content of the course and its assessment in the first lecture. The curriculum and course catalogue are available on the web of the university both in Icelandic and English. In accordance with the Bologna process the students of the University of Akureyri have graduated with a Diploma Supplement from the year 2005. The Diploma Supplement is meant to make it easier for students to explain to other universities, especially universities abroad, the standards they had to fulfill to complete their degree.

Conclusions

In the opinion of the Expert Committee, the University of Akureyri has met the requirements of Article 5 of the Higher Education Act No. 63/2006 by publishing learning outcomes for programmes in Nursing and Occupational Therapy in accordance with the National Qualifications Framework of Iceland.

10 Finances

UNAK has been running a substantial deficit for the past couple of years; however it is in reality a paper deficit only. Because of the arrangement with the government of Iceland for the financing of the University, the University is not actually expected to find the resources to retire the deficit at the end of each fiscal year but this is essentially “covered off” by the government. However, there is pressure on the University to establish a balanced budget and they have taken steps in that direction, such that the deficit projected for fiscal 2007 will be substantially less than it was for 2005 and 2006. As far as the expert committee could determine, this has been
accomplished without a significant reduction in services and programs and has been achieved by some cost cutting measures and perhaps some increase in revenue. One of the measures taken a couple of years ago was to cap enrollment since each additional student results in a cost.

The expert committee did not actually meet with the Vice-President, Finance and Administration but was presented with a summary document of the budget figures for 2005, 2006 and 2007. This was done mid-way through the onsite survey and there was not really time for a full discussion of financial matters.

Conclusions
The exert committee was satisfied that the University is in good health financially, that the deficit is being reduced at a fairly reasonable rate, and that this has been accomplished without undo hardship in terms of services and programs.

11 Summary of Findings
The expert panel found very few differences between the disciplines of Nursing and Occupational Therapy at UNAK and the following is a list of general findings applicable to UNAK and the Faculty of Health Sciences:

1. The faculty members in Nursing and Occupational Therapy are highly committed and extremely hard working.
2. Part-time faculty contribute positively to the programmes and are viewed a great asset strengthening the ties between all partners. They provide great depth and breadth of professional experience and expertise.
3. Health Sciences Students were uniformly enthusiastic and engaged in their own educational process. They rated highly the opportunity to work closely with faculty and issues raised were responded to very promptly.
4. Faculty to student ratios were good and staff and students felt this was associated with being a small and productive faculty where staff knew students and visa versa. All commented upon the cohesive and supportive working relationships.
5. Graduates of the university in the Health Sciences exited with a strong sense of community and professional identity. They believed themselves to be at the cutting edge of their professions but also ready for continuing professional development that would be part of their future studies. Their preparation for their disciplines was very good when compared with communities outside of Iceland.
6. The distance learning opportunities are very well applied and meet an important educational need in a country with remote populations.
7. The Faculty of Health Sciences has responded proactively to the Minister of Education review and the action plan in place is on target for completion.
The general areas of concern and/or opportunities for improvement were observed as follows:

1. The code of conduct for students is in draft format and it is important for this work to be progressed as planned for implementation in 2008.

2. New faculty report the need to be self motivated and learn speedily. There is limited capacity for induction to roles and responsibilities due to limited spare time by tenured faculty staff.

3. Teaching staff need to include more examples of occupational therapy practice in shared lectures.

4. UNAK graduates in the Health Sciences are sought out and have no difficulty finding positions. The expert committee observed that many nursing students were in fact employed in the healthcare system from the early days of their nursing training and appeared to be functioning effectively and efficiently in the healthcare environment. Furthermore, on graduation they are eagerly sought out for employment.

5. The *Numerus clausus* system creates tension for students in trying to meet the required criteria, and for some it results in cessation of study. At UNAK the pass grade is higher than at UI and students view this as inequitable. One suggestion put forward for consideration is that selection occurs prior to entry to the program, such as employed in other countries. Further consideration should be given to equalising the pass grade for both Universities.

6. The Faculty of Health Sciences has made great efforts to build up research and has set achievable targets for staff and specialists contributing to the programme. This includes the acquisition of overseas higher degrees and doctorates resulting in fruitful international collaboration and research projects. One aspect that needs to be kept under review is the ability to release staff for studies as well as deliver the accredited programmes.

7. Sessional teachers are a valuable asset because they are anchored in practice and add to the quality of the learning experience. Although not specifically involved in strategic planning, they have access to plans and feel able to contribute to the direction the Faculty is taking. They also are able to influence the curriculum and have a great deal of autonomy with the aspects they deliver.

8. The workload in the graduate program needs to be more spread out as there are significant peaks of assignment deadlines that affected study schedules.
12 Recommendations

The expert committee recommends that the Faculty of Health Sciences (and its two component faculties) at the University of Akureyri be accredited to award those degrees in the fields for which it has applied, with the next review to occur in 2012.

Signatures of the Accreditation Expert Committee of Higher Education Institutions in the field of Health Sciences in Iceland 2007:

28/01/2008

____________________________
Professor David Hawkins
University of Ottawa, Canada.
Chair

____________________________
Mrs. Margaret Lane
City University, London, UK.

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Professor Raimo Hiltunen
University of Helsinki, Finland.
Appendix 1: Agenda of site visit of Expert Committee to the University of Akureyri

Tuesday 16th October 2007

Expert Committee:
Prof. David G. Hawkins, Childrens Hospital of Eastern Ontario / Dep. of Pediatrics, University of Ottawa (Chair).
Prof. Raimo Hiltunen, Dean of Faculty, Professor of Pharmacognosy, University of Helsinki
Mrs. Margaret Lane, Former Associate Dean of Students, City University, Institute of Health Science, London.

Liaison officer:
Dr. Rebekka Valsdóttir, RANNIS, Iceland.

09:00 – 09:30
Meeting with the Dean, Vice-Dean, Heads of programme and Office Manager of Faculty of Health Sciences. Sólborg UA, Akureyri.
Room K102 Sólborg.

Present: Hermann Óskarsson Dean and Senior Lecturer (Associate Professor), Árún K. Sigurðardóttir Vice-Dean, Senior Lecturer (Associate Professor) and Head of the Nursing Programme, Guðrún Pálmadóttir Head of Occupational Therapy Programme, Junior Lecturer (Assisting Professor) Sigríður Halldórsdóttir Head of the Advanced Study Programme and Professor, and Lára Ó. Garðarsdóttir, Office Manager.

9:35 – 10: 35
Meeting with teaching staff members.
Sólborg UA, Akureyri.
Room K102 Sólborg.

Present: Hafdis Skúladóttir Lecturer (Assisting Professor), Hildigunnur Svavarsdóttir Lecturer (Assisting Professor), Ingvar Teitsson Senior Lecturer (Associated Professor), Kristín Þorarinsdóttir Lecturer (Assisting Professor), Kristjana Fenger Lecturer (Assisting Professor), Sara Stefánsdóttir Adjunct, Sólveig Ása Árnadóttir Lecturer (Assisting Professor), and Valerie Harris Lecturer (Assisting Professor).

10:40 - 11:40 -
Meeting with graduates.
Sólborg UA, Akureyri.
Room K102/K109 Sólborg.

Present: Debora Júlíu Robinson BSc OT, Eydis Hrónn Vilhjálmsdóttir BSc RN, Hannesina Scheving BSc RN, Helena Halldórsdóttir BSc OT, Jóna Birna Óskarðsdóttir BSc RN, Petrea G. Sigurðardóttir BSc OT, and Sigriður Jónsdóttir MSc.

11:45 – 13:00
Lunch meeting with the Rector of UA, the Managing Director of UA, the Director of Quality Management, the Director of
Report on the Accreditation of Higher Education Institution in the field of Health Sciences
University of Akureyri

Education and Teaching Administration, and the Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences.

Lunch at Sólborg.

Present: Þorsteinn Gunnarsson the Rector of UA, Ólafur Halldórsson Managing Director of UA, Sigrún Magnúsdóttir Director of Quality Management, Laufey Petrea Magnúsdóttir Director of Education and Teaching Administration, and Hermann Óskarsson Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences.

13:00 – 14:00

Meeting with Dean, Vice-Dean, Heads of Undergraduate and graduate Programme, Project Manager of Clinical Studies, Project Manager of Field Studies, Project Manager in Distance Teaching, Acting Director of Information Services and Office Manager of Faculty of Health Sciences.
Room K102 Sólborg.

Present: Hermann Óskarsson Dean and Senior Lecturer (Associate Professor), Árún K. Sigurðardóttir Vice-Dean, Head of the Nursing Programme and Senior Lecturer (Associate Professor), Guðrún Pálmadóttir Head of the Occupational Therapy Programme, Junior Lecturer (Assisting Professor), Sigriður Halldórsdóttir Professor and Head of the Advanced Study Programme, Guðfinna Hallgrímsdóttir, Project Manager of Clinical Studies, Ingibjörg S. Ásgeirsdóttir Junior Lecturer (Assisting Professor) and Project Manager of Field Studies, Astrid M. Magnúsdóttir, Acting Director of Information Services, and Lára Ó. Garðarsdóttir, Office Manager.

14:00– 15:30

Discussion of specific aspects of the programmes and projects, site visits, including talk to technical personnel.

1. Facilities for practical studies at the University of Akureyri.

Present: Árún K. Sigurðardóttir Vice-Dean, Head of the Nursing Programme and Senior Lecturer (Associate Professor), Guðrún Pálmadóttir Head of the Occupational Therapy Programme, Junior Lecturer (Assisting Professor), Guðfinna Hallgrímsdóttir, Project Manager of Clinical Studies, Ingibjörg S. Ásgeirsdóttir Junior Lecturer (Assisting Professor) and Project Manager of Field Studies.

2. The University of Akureyri Library.

Present: Astrid M. Magnúsdóttir, Acting Director of Information Services.

3. Facilities of distance learning (Room L101).

Present: Erlendur Steinar, Project Manager in Distance Teaching.

4. The University Hospital - location FSA (Practical studies) and location Kristnesspitali (Field studies).
**Present at Kristnesspítali:** Guðrönn Pálmadóttir Head of the Occupational Therapy Programme, Junior Lecturer (Assisting Professor), Ínghjörg S. Ásgeirsdóttir, Junior Lecturer (Assisting Professor) and Project Manager of Field Studies, Snæfríð Egílsdóttir Head Occupational Therapist of FSA, Íngvar Þóróddsson Chief Doctor of the Rehabilitation Clinic.

**Present at FSA:** Árún K. Sigurðardóttir Vice-Dean, Head of the Nursing Programme and Senior Lecturer (Associate Professor), Guðfinna Hallgrímsdóttir, Project Manager of Clinical Studies, Ólína Torfadóttir Director of Nursing, Ígfríður Síó Jónsdóttir, Nursing Educator, þóra Ákadóttir, Manager of Staff Development, Bjarni Jónasson Manager of the Health Science Institute and Human Resource Manager FSA, and Alexander Smárason Senior Lecturer (Associated Professor) Health Science Institute and Clinical Director of Obstetrics and Gynaecology FSA.

15:30 – 16:00 **Coffee at the University Hospital – location FSA and location Kristnesspítali.**

16:00 – 17:00 **Meeting with 9 representatives of students, undergraduate and postgraduate students.** Nursing students (N), Occupation therapy students (OT), and MSc students in health sciences (M). Room L103 Sólborg.

**Present:** Stefán Birgisson (First year OT), Harpa Hannesdóttir (Sec. year OT), Guðjón Benediktsson (Third year OT), Kristín G. Sigursteinsdóttir (Fourth year OT), Lára Kristín Jónsdóttir (First year N), Valdís Ósp Jónsdóttir (Sec. year N), Guðlaug Heiðdís Sveinsdóttir (Third year N), Íngibjörg Hulda R. Ragnarsson (Fourth year N), Guðrönn Elin Benónýsdóttir (MSc student).

17:00 – 17:30 **Buffer zone, time for Accreditation Expert Committee to gather their thoughts and perhaps interview selected people.** Room K102 Sólborg.

**Present:** Prof. David G. Hawkins, Childrens Hospital of Eastern Ontario / Dep. of Pediatrics, University of Ottawa (Chairman of Expert Committee), Prof. Raimo Hiltunen, Dean of Faculty, Professor of Pharmacognosy, University of Helsinki, Mrs. Margaret Lane, Former Associate Dean of Students, City University, Institute of Health Science, London, Dr. Rebekka Valsdóttir, RANNIS, Iceland (Liaison officer).

17:30 – 18:30 **Meeting with Dean and Vice-Dean, Heads of Programme, Office Manager, and Student Counsellor.** Room K102 Sólborg.

**Present:** Hermann Óskarsson Dean and Senior Lecturer (Associate Professor), Árún K. Sigurðardóttir Vice-Dean, Head of the Nursing Programme and Senior Lecturer (Associate Professor), Guðrönn Pálmadóttir Head of the Occupational Therapy Programme, Junior Lecturer (Assisting Professor), Ígfríður Hallgrímsdóttir Professor and Head of the Advanced Study Programme, Lára Ó. Garðarsdóttir, Office Manager, and Solveig Hrafnsdóttir, Student Counsellor.
18:30 – 19:55  
**Dinner**
Hótel KEA

**Present:** Prof. David G. Hawkins, Childrens Hospital of Eastern Ontario / Dep. of Pedriatrics, University of Ottawa (Chairman). Prof. Raimo Hiltunen, Dean of Faculty, Professor of Pharmacognosy, University of Helsinki, Mrs. Margaret Lane, Former Associate Dean of Students, City University, Institute of Health Science, London, Dr. Rebekka Valsdóttir, RANNIS, Liaison officer, Þorsteinn Gunnarsson the Rector of UA, Sigrún Magnúsdóttir Director of Quality Management, Hermann Óskarsson Dean, Sigriður Halldórsdóttir Professor and Head of the Advanced Study Programme, Lára Ó. Garðarsdóttir Office Manager, Snorri Björn Rafnsson Research Fellow (Cardiovascular Epidemiology), Department of Public Health Sciences University of Edinburgh Medical School.

19:55  
**Arrive at the airport, plane leaves for Reykjavik at 20:25**
Appendix 2: List of documents received by the expert committee

National Qualification Framework for Iceland (Draft translation).
Application for Accreditation of Health Sciences at the University of Akureyri

Attachments to application:
Agreement between the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and the University of Akureyri concerning teaching and research on the basis of the Universities Act, no. 136/1997
Annex to the agreement, 29 March 2004
Environmental Policy of the University of Akureyri
Equal Rights Plan for the University of Akureyri
Strategy of the Faculty of Health Sciences, The University of Akureyri 2007-2011
The Strategy of the University of Akureyri 2007-2011
Study programmes and Statistics of Health Sciences
The Institute of Health Sciences of the University of Akureyri, Future View and Policy
Agreement regarding the assessment of teaching for salary purposes
Contract on academic study programmes in East Iceland
Faculty of Health Sciences University of Akureyri Professional Collaboration with Parties Abroad
Statistics on Research Leaves for Teachers at the University of Akureyri 2000-2008
Rules on Exemtions from Advertisements in Connection with Work at the University of Akureyri
Rules on the Work of the Evaluation Committee, Appointments and Advancement of University Teaching Staff at the University of Akureyri
List of Permanent Academic Empolyee 2006-2007, Health Sciences
Staff CVs
The processing of applications for academic positions
Code of Conduct for students of the University of Akureyri draft proposal
Rules of the University of Akureyri on Penalties for Plagiarism
Facilities for Teachers, Students and Services
The University of Akureyri Computer System
External Assessment Health 2001
Letter from the Minister 2001
Position of UNAK on Nursing 2001
IMG Assessment
Letter of the Minister on IMG Assessment
Letter to the Ministry from Rector Jan 2006
Status of reactions to IMG May 2007
Quality Management System
UNAK Teaching Assessment
Current Status in Nursing
UNAK Financial Statement 2006
Presentation given by Dr. Þorsteinn Gunnarsson, rector, 16 Oct. 2007
Examples of clinical study assessment forms