

European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education
and the **Federation of Veterinarians of Europe**

European System of Evaluation of Veterinary Training

REPORT ON THE STAGE 2 VISITATION
TO THE ROYAL VETERINARY COLLEGE
University of London, UK

18 – 21 October 2011

EXPERT GROUP

Asger Lundorff Jensen, Copenhagen, DK

Expert visitor 1

Monica Forni, Bologna, IT

Expert visitor 2

Gert Niebauer, EAEVE

Coordinator

Anne Bellancourt, Paris, FR

Guest Visitor

CONTENTS

Introduction

Chapter 1. Policy statement (AP1)

Chapter 2. Assessment of students (AP 2), post-graduate education (AP 3)
student welfare (AP 4)

Chapter 3. Assessment of teaching staff (AP 5)

Chapter 4. Assessment of learning opportunities (AP 6)

Chapter 5. Assessment of training programme and the award of the title of
Veterinary Surgeon (AP 7)

Chapter 6. Assessment of quality for clinics, laboratories and farm (AP 8)

Chapter 7. Assessment of continuing education (AP 9)

Chapter 8. Assessment of research (AP 10)

Chapter 9. Assessment of internationalisation of education and research (AP 11)

Chapter 10. Assessment of cooperation with stakeholders and society (AP 12)

INTRODUCTION

The Royal Veterinary College (RVC) maintains Regulations and Quality Assurance procedures governing the development of courses and the College's Governance structures as specified in the University of London Regulations

The QA Strategy was reviewed in 2007. Responsibility for academic affairs rests ultimately with the Academic Board. From 2007/08 the Board has delegated responsibility for the assurance and enhancement of the quality of all taught courses to the Teaching Quality Committee.

All the quality Management structure is clearly defined in the "Quality Assurance Strategy for taught courses".

The Quality Assurance system has been judged satisfactory by the UK's Quality Assurance Agency that is full member of ENQA.

All of the documentation received shows that the process of assessing quality is in place for more than two years.

The SER2 report was prepared following the EAEVE requests and a flow chart and an example of documentation was provided for each assessment procedure. All the documentation is in English.

Full documentation of the assessment procedures was available for the expert team, some in hard copy the most on the web. The person responsible for quality assurance was always available and the communication with all the people interviewed was pleasant and profitable.

Some information required by Stage 2 was provided in the SER 2 only as a reference to SER 1, the expert team were in any case able to obtain them.

Various procedures exist to handle unexpected events. We follow up the case of suspect zoonotic disease in necroscopy room as well as the case of student accident.

The expert team received the following supplemental documentation:

AP1 - Policy Statement

AP1.1 Quality Assurance Strategy for Taught Courses

AP1.2 Report of the QAA Institutional Audit, 2009

AP 2 - Assessment of Students

AP2.1 Multiple Mini Interviews

AP2.2 Predictors of Success Project

AP2.3 Good Practice for Examination Boards

AP2.4 List of current BVetMed External Examiners (*hard copy only*)

AP2.5 External Examiner Reports, 2009/2010 (*hard copy only*)

AP2.6 Responses to External Examiners, 2009/2010 (*hard copy only*)

AP2.7 Minutes of Examination Boards (*hard copy only*)

AP2.8 Reports of the Assessment Working Party, 2007 - 2009

AP3 - Postgraduate Education

AP3.1 Research Student Admissions Procedures

AP3.2 Research Student Interviews - Supervisor Feedback Form

AP3.3 Research Student Interviews - Panel Interviews Scoring Procedure

AP3.4 Research Student Interviews - Interview Score Sheet

AP3.5 Research Student Training Programme, 2010/11

AP3.6 Code of Practice for Research Students

AP3.7 Research Students - appraisal

AP3.8 Report of the QAA Review of Research Degree Programmes, 2006

AP3.9 Minutes of the Research Degrees Committee, 2010/2011

AP3.10 Guidelines for Clinical Training Scholars and their Supervisors

AP3.11 Clinical Training Scholars - appraisal

AP3.12 MVetMed Students - appraisal

AP3.13 MVetMed Programme Specification

AP4 - Student Welfare

AP4.1 Minutes of Student Support Committee, 2010/2011

AP4.2 Tutoring Handbook 2011

AP5 - Assessment of Teaching Staff

AP5.1 Composition of Appointment Committees for Academic Posts

AP5.2 Procedure for appointment and conferment of the title of Professor and Reader

AP5.3 Student feedback on staff: template

AP5.4 Student feedback on staff: results

AP5.5 Letter from Chairman of TQC to staff regarding student feedback on their teaching

AP5.6 Observation of Teaching Scheme

AP5.7 Probationary Procedure for Academic Staff

AP5.8 Appraisal scheme: notes for guidance (*currently under revision*)

AP5.9 Staff appraisal forms (*currently under revision*)

AP5.10 Jim Bee Educator Prizes, 2011

AP5.11 Staff Training & Development Programme, 2011/12

AP5.12 PGCert, PGDip and MSc in Veterinary Education

AP5.13 Fellows of the HEA (*currently under revision*)

AP6 - Learning Opportunities

AP6.1 Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy, 2008-2013

AP6.2 E-learning Strategy, 2010-2015

AP6.3 Estates Strategy, 2009-2018

AP6.4 Minutes of Teaching Quality Committee, 2010/2011

AP6.5 Annual Report by the External Member of Teaching Quality Committee, 2011

AP6.6 ASD report to Academic Board, May 2011

AP7 - Assessment of training programme and the award of the title of Veterinary Surgeon

- AP7.1 Minutes of BVetMed Course Management Committee, 2010/11
- AP7.2 Quality Assurance Handbook
- AP7.3 Report of the Quinquennial Review of the BVetMed, 2009
- AP7.4 Examples of BVetMed Year Leaders' Reports, 2010/11
- AP7.5 Examples of BVetMed Strand Reviews
- AP7.6 Annual Report on Student Feedback, 2009/2010

AP8 - Assessment of quality for clinics, laboratories and farm

- AP8.1 Clinical Audit Training Programme
- AP8.2 QMHA Document Control Procedure
- AP8.3 QMHA Patient Incident Form
- AP8.4 QMHA Client Complaints Procedure and Policy
- AP8.5 CRIS/EPR Project
- AP8.6 QMHA M&M Report Example
- AP8.7 ERH Document Control Procedure
- AP8.8 BSAH Clinical Governance - Client Queries
- AP8.9 BSAH Mortality & Morbidity Reporting
- AP8.10 Terms of Business
- AP8.11 BSAH M&M Report Example
- AP8.12 ERH Complaints Protocol
- AP8.13 ERH Patient Incident Form
- AP8.14 ERH M&M Rounds
- AP8.15 Diagnostic Laboratories - QA Schemes
- AP8.16 Boltons Park Farm Quarterly Reports

AP9 - Assessment of Continuing Education

- AP9.1 Participant feedback form
- AP9.2 CertAVP: documentation for a selection of modules; student work, including examples of feedback; minutes of the Board of Examiners. (*hard copy only*)

AP10 - Assessment of Research

- AP10.1 Report from the Vice Principal (Research) to the Senior Management Group, January 2011
- AP10.2 Research Report to Academic Board, May 2011
- AP10.3 Research Assessment Exercise - outcome

AP11 - Assessment of Internationalisation of education and research

- AP11.1 A list of the College's collaborative trans-national research programmes, including current EU-funded research activities

AP12 - Assessment of co-operation with stakeholders and society

- AP12.1 Undergraduate Prospectus (*hard copy only*)
- AP12.2 Postgraduate Prospectus (*hard copy only*)
- AP12.3 Annual Review (*hard copy only*)
- AP12.4 Print-out from unistats website (*hard copy only*)
- AP12.5 Alumnus Magazine - "Eclipse" (*hard copy only*)

AP12.6 Representation of External Stakeholders

AP12.7 Graduate and employer feedback surveys

With the provided documents and the access to the Intranet web system the amount of material available to expert team for the evaluation was considered definitely satisfactory.

Chapter 1. POLICY STATEMENT

Findings:

The RVC Policy, Vision and Mission are described in the Corporate plan 2009-2013 published on the web. The Vision, to provide visionary leadership and excellence in veterinary science through innovative scholarship and pioneering clinical activity, clearly represents the understanding that teaching, research and clinical service are fundamentally linked, and true excellence in one area cannot be achieved in the absence of excellence in the others.

RVC practise research-informed teaching, less than 10% of staff is appointed to a “teaching only” role.

The RVC strategy for quality management and enhancement is spelt out in the Quality Assurance Strategy, which is reviewed annually by the Teaching Quality Committee.

Students are included in the Teaching Quality Committee.

Comments:

The whole concept of Quality, Quality control and Quality assurance seems to be deeply embedded in the lifestyle of the RVC and a holistic approach, which allows continuous improvement, is certainly evident.

On few occasions, it was difficult to understand the interaction between different organization levels. The Teaching Quality Committee and the Learning, Teaching & Assessment Committee are represented in some Flow Charts as parallel, without interaction (FC for AP2, AP3) but this does not seem possible.

Suggestions:

A rough overview of the organisation of the QA system could be very useful to identify principal responsibility, In the Intranet, the expert team were able to find rapidly the existing committee lists and the committee composition, and the expert team suggest that this information is made public. The RVC website could have a QA dedicated page with all the relevant procedure available at a glance even if details are available only after the Intranet access.

To facilitate this process, the expert team suggests that all departments share the same QM system, as for example the one utilized by Queen Mary Hospital (Share Point) to store SOPs, communication pathways, process ownerships and implementation.

Chapter 2. ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS, POST GRADUATE EDUCATION AND STUDENT WELFARE

2.1 UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

Findings:

Undergraduate students are assessed on the basis of objective evaluation as their results in high school qualifications and in the BMAT (a supplementary science aptitude test to help inform the selection process and is used by a select number of universities and veterinary schools) where this is required but also on the basis of their relevant animal-related experience and their references. After this pre-screening students undergo an interview that evaluates their scientific understanding, reasoning and curiosity, reasoning and judgement as applied to ethical and welfare issues, appreciation of public health issues and communication skills.

Foreign students can apply and there is no set limit to their number (within the maximum the College can accommodate).

Table1: Assessment admission of students

		Year ¹⁾ 2010	Year ¹⁾ 2009
Number of students applying		1405	1343
Number of students admitted		217	251
% foreign students		19.5	14.0
Assessment of selection criteria ³⁾ :	Good	X	X
	acceptable		
	need improvement		

¹⁾year n: year preceding evaluation ²⁾depending on the country and school, student-cohorts may be admitted based on different selection criteria ³⁾please specify when different criteria had been used

- a) Assessment procedures of the performance of enrolled undergraduates. (see also Annex III, Contents SER 1, chapter 5)

The RVC examination system is a very controlled one. The specific Regulations for each Examination has been approved by the Academic Board on the

recommendation of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee (e.g. “good practice for examination boards”).

At the beginning of each course, students are informed about course syllabus, learning objectives and outcome as well as examination methods. This information is also made available on the RVC Intranet.

The major examinations take place once a year (June -year one, two and final- April - year three – and December – year four to leave space for rotations) and it is composed of several parts. The procedure for this complex exam preparation is very well described in “Good practice for examination boards” and procedure for appointment of internal and external examiners is described in the “Quality assurance handbook”

The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee revises the procedure annually on the basis of results obtained. Different kinds of exams are used depending on the topic, oral examination is used in particularly to test communication skills and the professional ability to defend the research projects. Continuous assessment is performed during rotation, not by a single professor but by the whole group that collaborate to the specific activities.

Boards of examiners (including external examiners) are required to validate the assessment system as well the results themselves.

Students who fail an examination at the first attempt are permitted only one re-sit opportunity after 8-12 weeks. Any further re-examination requires permission from a dedicated committee. Failure to pass the second, or the permitted third attempt, yield termination of the studies.

A general tutoring system (4-5 students/staff) allow a survey on general results obtained by the students to correct those students who tend to always be just above the passing mark. This is particularly relevant in the rotation period.

Students receive results electronically and support is given to students who fail an examination or to students whose progress causes concern.

Students take part in the Teaching Quality Committee and in the Learning Teaching & Assessment Committee so they can influence the process.

Comments:

The RVC undertakes a retrospective study to investigate the association between pre-entry and within course factors and probability of success. At the moment the effectiveness is measured on the basis of the results achieved. The procedures and the guidelines for interview assure their objectivity.

The knowledge and handling of assessment methods from a pedagogic point of view seems to be a very strong background of all the people interviewed. Since last year

the RVC offers a MSc in Veterinary education to which have registered several staff members. Special care is devoted to new staff members with little teaching experience who are flanked and assessed by senior staff.

Teaching and assessment procedures are subject to a rigorous QM and are considered highly adequate by the expert team.

The information about each course is not provided according to ECTS rules and are only published in the Intranet website.

Suggestions:

The publication of learning objective and outcomes in the open website is desirable.

The ECTS system should be applied to the programme and its courses as this would be a mean to facilitate formal exchange of international students.

2.2 POST-GRADUATE STUDENT EDUCATION; ACADEMIC TRACK

Findings:

RVC offers PhD and Master's Degree (both taught and by research). Detailed procedures exist to regulate the admission and assessment of students to the academic track (e.g. "admission procedure -PhD"). Candidates who satisfy the entry criteria for taught Master's programmes may be offered a place by the Admissions Tutor, who is normally the Course Director. The admission procedures for UK and EU students are identical; overseas candidates could be eligible for some RVC PhD scholarships, but they would need to be able to pay the difference between the EU and overseas tuition fees themselves (or the potential supervisor guarantees to cover the costs for salary, tuition and running costs of the project).

Each Master's programme has its own Course Management Committee and refers to the Teaching Quality Committee and Learning Teaching & Assessment Committee and the the Master's Coordinating Committee for program validation and approval and is subject to the same procedures as undergraduate courses.

The quality and standards of research degrees are assured by the Research Degrees Committee which reports to Academic Board for final approval of supported by external funding. PhD student progress is assessed annually and they must orally defend their thesis with a committee composed by at least two decision making. Some PhD students are external members

PhD students are involved in teaching. They are not required to publish a minimum of paper before obtaining the degree. The PhD thesis is a monography.

Comments:

From the minutes of the Research Degree committee, the expert team understand the care that is placed to assess the participation of PhD students to the seminars offered by the RVC and to the appraisal interview that annually establish their progress in the specific research field. The expert team consider the QM process applied to be satisfactory.

Suggestions:

A list of PhD student publications could make evident the good results obtained in the PhD programmes. PhD students could undergo the same evaluation as staff for publications (quality, number and citations).

Tables 2: figures for post-graduate academic education

Year	Type of programme	Number students enrolled	Number students passed	Mean number paper per student	Mean number impact factor obtained per student
2009/2010	PhD	29	20		
2009/2010	Master (taught) ²⁾	63	55		
2009/2010	Master (by research)	3	4		
2009/2010	Postgraduate Diploma ³⁾	8	2		
2008/2009	PhD	22	11		
2008/2009	Master (taught) ²⁾	83	61		
2008/2009	Master (by research)	1	0		
2008/2009	Postgraduate Diploma ³⁾	6	2		

¹⁾year n: year preceding evaluation
by research

²⁾make a distinction between a taught master's and a master's

³⁾ please specify

2.3 POST-GRADUATE STUDENT EDUCATION; PROFESSIONAL TRACK

Findings:

Two professional track programmes for veterinary graduates are offered

- one-year Junior Clinical Training Scholar (CTS) programme (“Interns”)
- three-year Senior Clinical Training Scholar (CTS) programme (“Residents”)

These programmes are available in both the Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences and the Department of Pathology and Infectious Diseases. Four CTS in anatomical pathology and one CTS in clinical pathology are externally funded and involve formal external placement.

It is expected that the Senior Clinical Training Scholar student register for a Master’s degree, i.e. the MVetMed.

Written guidelines for CTS and their supervisors exist and communicate clearly the target, the scope and the learning outcomes of the CTS programmes.

Applicants must hold a recognised veterinary degree eligible for registration with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, and must have a good level of English: 7 in IELTS or 93 in TOEFL (Internet Based). Scholarships are advertised, in the *Veterinary Record* and on the RVC website. Applicants must submit an application form; two sealed confidential references; a letter of intent; a copy of their degree certificate and any postgraduate certificates. Short-listed applicants are invited for interview at the RVC. Interviews are conducted by the supervisor and at least one other senior academic from the discipline.

Cooperation with other institutions includes collaborations with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA) for the training of CTSs in Veterinary Public Health. Internationally, there is joint supervision with the National Veterinary School of Nantes, France, and with the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD). In Veterinary Internal Medicine, residents from the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Justus-Liebig-University, Gießen, working towards DipECVIM-CA, currently spend two 5 month blocks at the RVC, one in their second year and one in their third year.

Student assessment has three aspects:

- all CTSs are appraised through a common annual appraisal system;
- Senior CTSs who are enrolled concurrently on the MVetMed or the MSc in Veterinary Epidemiology are required to complete assignments successfully in order to progress towards the award of the Master’s degree;
- CTS students working towards membership of a European or American Specialty College are also required to undertake any assessment required by that College.

As reported in Table 3 (SER-2) and the documentation presented during the visit, the success rate for obtaining the degree of Diplome is high. From the interviews, it was clear that the common annual appraisal system for CTS works in the sense that inappropriate events are identified and corrected. If there is a conflict between the supervisor and the CTS students, this is most often solved informally but formal procedures as listed in the Code of Practice for postgraduate degrees can also be applied.

Comments

The area of postgraduate professional education is streamlined, regulated and internationally oriented with appropriate readily accessible procedures in action for admission, annual appraisal, and programme optimisation.

Suggestions:

None.

Chapter 3. ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING STAFF

Findings:

The RVC has a comprehensive scheme for student evaluation of teaching and teachers, using standard questionnaires approved by the Teaching Quality Committee, on which there is student representation. The response rates are considered good. Questionnaires have been found to be less successful in gathering student feedback on clinical rotations, and the College therefore holds an annual "Rotation Feedback Forum". The College also gathers on-line feedback on every rotation.

The Minutes of the Examination Boards show the possibility to evaluate teaching success on the basis of the satisfactory answers given by the students to specific topics, and this is also supported by the opinion of the external members.

Staff is evaluated across all domains of their activity, under the control of the Senior Management Group of the College, and of the Human Resources Department. This includes research results and peer observation of teaching.

Evaluation of scientific merit is performed on the basis of external audit (Research assessment Exercise) mainly based on bibliometric data.

Once they are confirmed in post, academic staff continues to be appraised annually according to the following:

- i. teaching responsibilities, goals and achievements;
- ii. scholastic progress including publications, contributions to the scientific literature and relevant contributions to the media;
- iii. research grants and contracts applied for or awarded;
- iv. scope, quantity, and value of all professional services provided;
- v. administrative service and any other relevant contributions to College, University, professional bodies and national affairs;
- vi. 'private practice' and other extra mural activities (e.g. broadcasting, professional committees)

In addition to the possibility to be promoted, five Jim Bee Educator Prizes are awarded annually (£1000 each).

The Expert team received as example the Student Evaluation of Staff 2009/2010: BVet Med Yr 4 (sum of 65 Directed Learning 2 Clinics 81 Practicals 94 Lectures and 11 Tutorials) all point considered get the maximum evaluation 4/4 except Pace (3 / 4) and stimulating handout (3 / 4).

Comments:

The Expert team acknowledges that the College takes seriously the continuous improvement of staff educative capacity, by offering training opportunities (some compulsory) in the pedagogic field and in specific veterinary education.

As in many other Faculties the return rate of student evaluations could be a problem. RVC is aware of this problem and is taking corrective measures, i.e. it was decided to monitor on a biannual basis those teachers that get excellent results in the last years. The results of evaluation of individual Teaching staff are not public, but the student's representative confirmed to the Expert team that usually they obtain a feed-back to their relevant concerns.

Suggestions:

None

Chapter 4. ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Findings:

Several structures are in place to assess, assure and promote the quality of the learning environment:

- i. the IT Strategy Group
- ii. the College Services Committee (the Learning Resources Centres, the Library and Information Services Division, the e-media Unit and the physical estate, including teaching facilities)
- iii. the Student Support Committee (housing, Financial Advice, Counselling, Learning Support, Occupational Health, Disability Services, Careers Service, Services for International Students, Chaplaincy Service)

IT and library facilities are provided at a Faculty level.

Comments:

The expert team found that the “Academic Support and Development Annual report to academic board” documents that a QM system is in place that closely monitors the academic environment facing also the actual budget reductions. Students are involved in all processes.

IT learning opportunities are constantly being expanded; many projects are running to implement the learning opportunity for students by new media. The most of the lecture are automatically recorded and updated every year. Coupled with their ppt presentation are available as pod cast for students (Echo360). The PodBook project which provides quick access to online resources via short-loan netbooks has been expanded. The Wikivet project (open also to other users outside the Faculty) grow with over 2,000 pages.

Suggestions:

None

Chapter 5. ASSESSMENT OF TRAINING PROGRAMMES AND THE AWARD OF THE TITLE OF VETERINARY SURGEON

Findings:

The learning outcomes are developed under the auspices of the Course Management Committee and include the specific achievements by graduates of the Day One competencies. The intended learning outcomes and a description of essential competencies are published and easily retrievable on the Intranet.

Procedures for formal curriculum and teaching programme approval and regular reviews are actively in place. The BVeMed programme consists of Strands, Rotations and Electives, for each of which an Annual review is produced. Each Year has its own leader who also produces a report. This report is debated in the Course Management Committee, the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee, and the Teaching Quality Committee, and amendments to the programme are made accordingly. Means to communicate data and relevant information from both internal and external sources are also present and active.

The BVeMed programme is a fully integrated programme and this has made it difficult, perhaps impossible, to apply the ECTS system to the programme.

Formal procedures for monitoring delivery of the curriculum and the teaching programme are in place and active. Students participate actively in quality assessment activities both as informants and by participating in the various committees, excluding the Board of Examiners.

The Teaching Quality Committee produces an Annual Report on Graduate Surveys. Here, graduates (1 and 3 years from graduation) are asked a number of questions relating to their appreciation of what in the undergraduate study were useful to them and what were not useful. Employers are also asked. The information is actively used in course planning and teaching, e.g. when revising the curriculum in 2007.

To promote life-long learning, the teaching and learning strategy has been changed, e.g. the didactic, lecture-based approach has been reduced in favour of more emphasis on problem-solving in small groups. Alumni and graduates are offered a number of relevant courses and initiatives.

Comments:

RVC has very detailed and formal procedures for programme and course development and improvement. Information is obtained in a streamlined, periodical and logical manner from a variety of internal and external sources, and the information is actively absorbed by relevant committees and boards who can amend and optimise the program, its modules and courses if necessary. Students are actively involved in relevant committees.

Suggestions:

If possible, the ECTS system could be applied to the programme and its courses as this would be a mean to facilitate formal exchange of international students.

Chapter 6. ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE FOR CLINICS, LABORATORIES AND FARM

Findings

Quality assurance in the clinical area:

Quality assurance relies on

- Quality policies
- standard operating procedures (some posted but all are accessible on the Intranet and periodically reviewed)
- an audit system for monitoring performance against the standards;
- reporting and investigation systems for incidents and complaints;
- regular morbidity and mortality reports and meetings to review how improvements can be made.

Quality assurance in laboratory diagnostic services:

The RVC's diagnostic laboratories provide a comprehensive service supported by Board Certified Specialists, in Haematology, Clinical biochemistry, Cytology, Histology, Immunohistochemistry, Microbiology, Parasitology, Endocrinology, Serology, Post mortem examination

Appropriate quality control measures are applied in the laboratory diagnostic services, e.g. inclusion of systematic (each run/daily/periodically) quality control procedures. The laboratories also participate in external quality assurance schemes:

- Biochemistry: Randox International Quality Assessment Scheme
- Endocrine: Society for Comparative Endocrinology Quality Assurance Program
- Haematology: UK National External Quality Assessment Service (NEQAS) – Haematology
- Histology: UK NEQAS for Cellular Pathology
- Laboratory Animal Diagnostic Services: The Laboratory Health Monitoring Club
- Microbiology and Parasitology: Veterinary Laboratories Agency, QA Unit

There is close cooperation between personnel in the laboratory diagnostic areas and the clinical areas. A number of clinical specialties (e.g. critical care) have patient-near haematology, biochemical, and blood-gas analyzers and quality control of these analyzers is also done in cooperation with personnel in the laboratory diagnostic services.

Quality assurance in the farm facilities:

The Farm participates in a number of national “Farm Assurance” schemes:

- The Assured Dairy Farm Scheme, administered by Cmi. This is an accreditation scheme which accompanies our milk supply to ARLA, a standard required to join the ASDA producer group.
- FABBL - Farm assurance for beef and lamb production. This entitles the College to use the “Little Red Tractor” logo.
- Traditional Farm Fresh Turkey Association. EU Traditional Speciality Guaranteed and we can also market birds under the Golden Promise label.
- CHeCS – Cattle Health Certification Standards (UK). Accredited BVD Free Unvaccinated status.

The senior academic staff member with responsibility for the Farm reports on both productivity and morbidity to the Senior Management Committee biannually who then decides about initiatives to further improve the quality of the Farm.

Comments:

A comprehensive quality assurance process with a clear focus on patient safety and quality of service is operating in the clinical area, laboratory diagnostic services and farm facilities- There is a strong commitment to and progress in monitoring and improving quality, and this is reflected in the way that incidents are handled where the focus is more directed towards learning from incidents rather than finding someone to blame for an incident.

All employees are assessed in annual appraisal interviews. Veterinarians in the clinics are requested to adhere to continuous professional development, at least 35 hours per year. Besides being active within research and teaching, a significant number of veterinarians are also Diplomates of a European or American College. All nurses are qualified nurses, some with advanced qualifications. Personnel in reception and other support areas are also having their relevant competences and qualifications sustained and improved.

All the College’s clinical facilities (except the Farm Animal Clinical Centre) are accredited to RCVS Tier 3 status.

Suggestions:

None.

Chapter 7. ASSESSMENT OF CONTINUING EDUCATION

Findings

There is no legal requirement for Veterinary Surgeons in the UK to undertake continuing professional development (CPD). However, CPD is the personal obligation of all responsible veterinary surgeons and the minimum CPD recommended is 105 hours over three years with an average of 35 hours per year. While not being a legal requirement, it is still being checked by the RCVS that all veterinarians at the College fulfil this recommendation.

The RVC's aim, as set out in the Corporate Plan, is to be the foremost national provider of high quality CPD programmes for veterinarians and para-veterinarians. Continuing education is thus integral to the activities at the RVC and is given either as non-award bearing courses and the award-bearing RCVS Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice (CertAVP).

The non-award bearing courses are planned on a yearly basis. Courses offered cover a wide range of topics relevant to practitioners (farm animals, horses, small animal, exotics). A booklet containing information on the courses is mailed out to practitioners nationwide. Information is also readily available on the Internet. A Course Management Committee specifically for these courses oversees the overall programme of non-award bearing courses including quality assurance. The courses are typically face-to-face and/or on-line courses. Participant questionnaires are the main method of evaluation. The results of the evaluation are used to identify areas for improvement and for planning other courses.

The CertAVP began in 2007. A Course Management Committee which included module leaders and an external expert and external examiners (members of the Board of Examiners) oversee the programme. The quality assurance procedures applied to the undergraduate courses are also applied to CertAVP courses. Information on the CertAVP is also included in the booklet mailed to practitioners nationwide and is also readily available on the Internet.

A list of courses, more than 100 courses per year, offered in 2011 and assessment of courses by the participants were available.

Participation in teaching in Continuing education courses is not mandatory for employees but is noted as positive in the annual appraisal review and there is also a financial bonus to those who participate in teaching continuing education courses.

Comments:

Continuing education is integrated in the activities of the RVC. All activities are subjected to appropriate quality assurance procedures. The CPD activity is also a significant component of the RVC's outreach initiatives.

Suggestions:

None.

Chapter 8. ASSESSMENT OF RESEARCH

Findings:

The corporate plan is formulated based on external drivers and the college mission. From the corporate plan, the research strategy committee formulates the research strategy of the RVC.

Research groups are then instrumental in carrying out the research strategy.

The Vice-Principal for Research is essential in monitoring and reporting research outcome to the Senior Management Group and the Academic Board. Key performance indications include Grant income, Publications, PhD studentships, and Awards.

Assessment of research performance is included in the annual appraisal review of academics and it is a key element in hiring and promotion of academic staff. In addition to the annual appraisal review, the Vice-Principal for Research meets each member of the research academic staff annually to discuss their current and planned publications and grant applications. The Vice-principal periodically follows up on these meetings informing both the appraiser and the appraisee in the annual appraisal review.

Research at the Royal Veterinary College is of international quality. The periodic UK-wide Research Assessment Exercise is the key external audit of the research quality of the RVC. The audit was last conducted in 2008 and ranked the RVC as England's best veterinary school, amongst institutions whose research is exclusively veterinary related. A total of 55% of submitted academic staff were viewed as producing "world class" or "internationally excellent" research. Bibliometric indicators are available to assist in this ranking but they are not used as the only means of ranking.

The number of published original research papers were 240 (in 2010), 248 (in 2009), and 224 (in 2008).

Grant application is an important activity for the academic research staff. A system is in place to assist researchers in grant writing. The quality of previous research performance constitutes a significant element in obtaining research grants, and the quality is reflected in both a steadily high success rate for grant applications and in a steady increase in the total grant income.

Research methods and results are conveyed into basic veterinary training through a variety of routes:

- the annual process of Strand review is used to ensure that the course content continues to incorporate the latest relevant scientific advances;
- the Elective modules in the Final Year are designed to be outside the core curriculum, and hence incorporate specific content from staff research programmes;
- the Professional Studies Strand incorporates specific instruction in research methodology;

- Students are required to undertake two research projects, the second of which lasts at least eight weeks and is designed to facilitate the completion of a substantive piece of original research with a view to possible publication.
- In addition, one of the instructions to all Year and Strand Leaders is that “great stories in science” are an intended theme to be preserved alongside essential underpinning knowledge and Day One skills.
- Outstanding undergraduate students are permitted to intercalate for a PhD during their course
- The RVC offers an annual Summer Studentship Scheme where up to 15 undergraduate students are given the opportunity to undertake a research project
- Undergraduate students are encouraged to present the results of their work outside the RVC.

Comments:

The expert team find that the quality assurance procedures of research activities and research performance are active, in place and appropriate. The expert team also find that research methods and results are adequately conveyed into basic veterinary training

Suggestions:

None.

Chapter 9. ASSESSMENT OF INTERNATIONALISATION OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Findings:

The corporate plan is formulated based on external drivers and the college mission. From the corporate plan, an internationalisation strategy has been formulated. A significant element in this strategy is cooperation with Mainland China, Hong Kong, Giessen (GE). The strategy also opens up for short course development under the brand of RVC International.

Undergraduate students are encouraged to undertake extramural studies placements and research project for up to 13 weeks outside the UK.

RVC supports the Undergraduate Research Team, which undertakes a biennial expedition, focused on a topic related to veterinary research and animal health, in a developing country.

RVC does not currently participate in Erasmus Mundus programme but is in the final stages of preparing to participate. However, when students from other EU countries approach the RVC directly, RVC considers them on a case-by-case basis.

At the postgraduate (Master's degree) level, the College's focus is on securing scholarships that enable students from developing countries to study in the UK. Two or more Commonwealth Scholarships are available to fund places in the Master's in Control of Infectious Diseases in Animals, Veterinary Epidemiology, Wild Animal Health or Wild Animal Biology.

The Clinical Training Scholarship programmes are open to students from veterinary schools worldwide. The Senior Clinical Training Scholar programme recruits particularly strongly from EU states outside the UK.

On its website, RVC clearly addresses international students and supply a lot of information useful to prospective students from other countries.

The current academic staff profile includes staff from 25 countries, of whom 33 staff are from EU countries other than the UK, and 24 are from outside the EU.

RVC actively participates in research projects, e.g. a Marie Curie action plan, with international partners, including developing partners from developing countries.

Comments:

Internationalisation is highly and actively prioritised by the RVC and the initiative to become a partner in the Erasmus Mundus programme is highly appreciated.

Suggestions:

None.

Chapter 10. ASSESSMENT OF COOPERATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS AND SOCIETY

Findings:

RVC regularly publishes up-to-date, objective and accurate information, both quantitative and qualitative, about the study programme. This information is readily accessible on the official Unistats website (the more quantitative data) and the RVCs own website (the more qualitative information, e.g. quotes from students, and objective information about the RVC study programmes and the College as a whole). Booklets containing information for prospective under- and postgraduate students are also produced regularly and also accessible on the RVC website.

RVC is also required to publish an Annual Review which is also accessible on the RVC website and includes RVC's description to which extent it meets its own expectations.

The College has an active alumnus association. It also employs a staff member with responsibility for maintaining contact with alumni. The College maintains contact with its alumni through a number of means, e.g. the magazine "Eclipse". RVC has established the website RVC4life, in parallel to the Alumnus Association, as a vehicle for providing graduates with on-going benefits relevant to their professional activities.

Further, the Teaching Quality Committee produces an Annual Report on Graduate Surveys. Here, graduates (1 and 3 years from graduation) are asked a number of questions relating to their appreciation of what in the undergraduate study was useful to them and what was not useful. Employers are also asked. The information is actively used in course planning and teaching, e.g. when revising the curriculum in 2007.

RVC is also involved in several outreach initiatives involving e.g. State Schools, courses for laymen, Farming for All (a rehabilitation project), Observe lambing (for laymen to observe lambing)

Comments:

RVC highly prioritise and participate in cooperation with stakeholders and society through a number of means. Feedback from society and stakeholders is readily absorbed into the College and used for improving the activities of the College.

The Graduate and Employer surveys constitute a significant input to the College.

Suggestions:

None.

Executive Summary

The expert team did not identify any deficiencies.

All procedures are adequately subjected to Quality Assurance and Quality Management.

It is the opinion of the expert team that RVC has a very strong focus on Quality, Quality control, Quality assurance and Quality management of all its actions and initiatives.

The expert team suggest:

- To include on the RVC website a QA dedicated page with all relevant procedures available at a glance
- To present a rough overview of the organisation of the QA system in order to identify principal responsibility
- To publish learning objective and outcomes in the open website is desirable.
- To apply the ECTS system the BVeMed programme and its courses as this would be a mean to facilitate formal exchange of international students
- To continue the initiative to become a partner in the Erasmus Mundus programme.

All together, the expert team find that the Royal Veterinary College fulfils all the standards listed in the Stage 2 accreditation system.

DECISION BY ECOVE: FULL ACCREDITATION