

FINAL VISITATION REPORT AS ISSUED BY ECOVE ON 20.5.2014

**European Association
of Establishments for Veterinary Education**

**Association Européenne
des Etablissements d'Enseignement
Vétérinaire**



**REPORT ON THE STAGE 2 EVALUATION VISITATION TO THE FACULTY OF
VETERINARY MEDICINE AND THE FACULTY OF VETERINARY HYGIENE AND
ECOLOGY OF BRNO, CZECH REPUBLIC**

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In order to derive the necessary information, the Faculty must develop twelve (12) assessment procedures (AP 1 – 12).

Chapter 1. POLICY STATEMENT

Findings

The University of Veterinary and Pharmaceutical Sciences Brno has a System of Quality Evaluation of Veterinary Training (SQEVT) that is described in the University's principal strategic document, its Long-term Plan of Educational and Scientific, Research, Development, Innovation and Other Creative Activities, Long-term Plan Update and Institutional Development Plan.

Quality assurance is achieved through loops that involve transmission of information from the level of the clinics and departments, to senior levels in the University, the Academic Senate and Executive Council, and back to the clinics.

Comments

There is some reference to strategy for quality enhancement of education in the University-level, long term plan, but no clear articulation with faculty strategies.

Within the faculties there is evidence of a traditional system for quality assurance and enhancement, including auditing, that relies on informal discussions leading to actions, but the details of these are not well documented. This contrasts with what appears to be a new University System for the Evaluation of Veterinary Training, centred on the Veterinary Training Board, that comments on the achievement of EAEVE thresholds. However, the traditional faculty and new university systems are not convincingly linked, and used in a coherent way to inform the debates and decisions of the university's academic senate. Judgement of the efficacy of this relationship was hampered by the lack of two years of meeting notes. This meant that it was not possible to follow flows of information, link these to actions, and evaluate outcomes. In addition, there is no indication of how the quality assurance systems are improved when deficiencies are noted. For instance, the SER comments that relatively few students take part in the evaluation process, but given that this seems to be a key source of information, it is unclear what action is being taken to address this.

Useful measures of research quality have been established and are linked to individual rewards. In contrast, the main measure of educational quality, linked to rewards, in addition to scientific excellence, is quantity (rather than quality) of teaching.

There was a lack of evidence of a clear definition of roles of staff at different managerial levels in the faculty. In particular there was no clear evidence of managerial control of individual teachers by section heads responsible for co-ordinating the teaching.

Students were represented in various boards and could give their views, but they did not feel that they had any control over the conclusions.

Suggestions

The University must consider creating and publishing a separate strategy for continuous enhancement of quality. It is also important that faculty measures and processes, that clearly have a meaning for Deans and their staff, are well documented and link in a meaningful way to University-level measures and University decision making bodies. This includes the need for faculties to establish clearly measurable targets for improvement that can be evaluated on an annual basis or at other intervals that are appropriate to their achievement. The University should also look at its procedures for revising its quality assurance systems to ensure that all information flow and feedback loops work as intended.

Evaluation in relation to Assessment Procedure 1

Not satisfactory

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

2.1 UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

Findings

Each faculty provides separate Czech and English language study programmes, although in Food Hygiene the English language study programme has only been running for three years so no students have graduated yet. All students take a university entrance examination in biology and chemistry, and similar thresholds in terms of minimum standards required to enter the programmes are set. However, as demand far exceeds supply for places on the Czech language study programme, the actual level of students entering the course is well above this threshold. Despite this, the percentages of students failing to complete the respective English language study programmes are reported as similar to the corresponding Czech programmes. State funding is limited to the Czech language programme.

A variety of assessment methods are used across the programme. Examination content and methods are described as defined at teacher level. University examinations can be taken a total of three times during a single examination period; however, a student with sufficient credits can proceed to the next year and may take the failed examination a further three times. If these are failed, a student must leave the course, but can retake the entrance examination and start again. State examinations can only be taken twice.

Comments

The University has a large percentage of students that fail to complete its programmes, particularly in Food Hygiene. This is attributed by all involved to the difficulty of the programme and some subjects, in particular.

Topics for study across the curricula are listed, but although the University has undertaken a project on learning objectives/outcomes these are not clearly used to frame the whole educational programmes. There is no “blueprinting” of examinations, and no clear documentation of the alignment between outcomes, assessment and teaching. Standard setting is at the level of the individual teacher, and it is routine for oral examinations with a single teacher to be chosen as the main assessment method. This means that, in the absence of any clear system for establishing or verifying grade thresholds, it is hard for curriculum managers to have oversight of standards.

There is no evidence that individual questions are analysed in terms of how they perform. There is also no clear strategy for the use of formative and summative examinations, or the use of the two processes in combination.

There is a well-structured process for selecting guarantors of subjects, who determine if the teaching is delivered appropriately and how the subject is assessed. However, much of the system seems to be based on tradition, and there seems to be no requirement for such individuals to have received training in modern techniques in teaching delivery and assessment.

Published criteria exist for grading student responses but the descriptors focus on the student’s level of knowledge and do not incorporate other categories of learning outcome.

Suggestions

The University needs to better understand the reasons why students fail to progress. In particular, it may be that there are particular factors not recognised by its entrance examination that could be distinguished by a modification of this test. This might allow better selection for success, or targeted study skills support in the early years to help students adapt to university education.

The University should give serious consideration to the creation of assessment strategies for its programmes that are aligned with overall programme learning outcomes and course-by-course learning outcomes, including the day one skills. This would provide confidence, through the university’s quality assurance structures at both faculty and university levels, that standards are appropriate and methods match the skills being tested.

The University must review its policy for single examiner led oral examinations, and consider ways in which the application of the principles of best practice in assessment could result in improvement in its assessment processes.

Evaluation in relation to Assessment Procedure 2

Not satisfactory

2.2, 2.3 POST-GRADUATE STUDENT EDUCATION;ACADEMIC/PROFESSIONAL TRACKS

Findings

The University provides postgraduate education through both academic and professional tracks. The PhD is based on a conventional thesis and a further requirement for completion in addition to satisfying a panel of examiners is at least one publication in a peer-reviewed journal. The award of a university diploma and a PhD is dependent on passing both university and state doctoral examinations.

Professional education includes both national and international tracks. The national track is focused around the knowledge and skills required for the State Veterinary Administration. There is no national qualification focused on the work of the private practitioner. The international track is built around European College residency programmes. However, only one student is currently enrolled.

Comments

The University has a thriving academic track leading to the degree of PhD. Supervision quality is assessed by the Course Review Board. Students who feel that they have been unfairly treated in their final assessment are able to appeal to the Rector.

The University's professional track focused on State Veterinary Administration is also successful. The University is able to develop companion animal specialist training through residency programmes run under the auspices of the European Specialty Colleges. However, there is only one resident currently in the system. This relates to problems funding these posts, as there is no national funding in contrast to the situation with PhD degrees.

Suggestions

The university is encouraged to look at creative solutions to develop and support European College Residency training.

Evaluation in relation to Assessment Procedure 3

Satisfactory

2.4 STUDENT WELFARE

Findings

The University has a range of provisions in place to deal with student wellbeing in relation to both curricular and extra-curricular activities, as well as medical needs, social and accommodation needs.

Comments

Both faculties have a student support officer dedicated to English language study programme students in addition to student support officers for students in the Czech programme. This provides important academic support, but there is no clear strategy to support the social integration of the English language students, and this is particularly concerning with the small numbers in the Faculty of Hygiene and Ecology.

Student support officers are the first point of call for students who have questions or are in difficulty. Such issues can include stress and mental health issues. However, there are no formal systems for dealing with difficult situations that separate these from the academic system. In particular, all individual problems that go beyond “ordinary cases” are reported to the Vice-Dean of the Faculty, and may be dealt with by the Vice-Dean or the Dean.

The University has no formal procedures for recognising and making appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities such as dyslexia and dyspraxia. The choice of whether or not to provide extra time in examinations is at the discretion of the individual examiner.

The main organs through which the students can influence university decisions appear to be in the Faculty and University Academic Senates. Students elect their representatives, but there does not seem to be any protection for the minority (English language study programme) students that ensures that their voice is heard in these committees.

Suggestions

It is recommended that the University examines ways in which it could help increase the social integration of the English language study students in Food Hygiene, with other student groups.

The reviewers recognise the sincerity of senior faculty staff when it comes to them dealing sensitively and confidentially with student concerns. It was also noted that staff are not aware of any concerned students who feel that the mechanism of reference to Vice-Dean or Dean is inappropriate. However, by definition, these students would not be obvious. The university should seriously consider a confidential route independent of academic management for students who might be concerned, given that they required “medical clearance” to enter the programme, that self-identification of learning needs or disabilities might harm their academic careers, and thus fail to come forward.

The University should consider creating one seat at faculty level, and two seats at University Academic Senate level for English language study programme students.

Evaluation in relation to Assessment Procedure 4

Less satisfactory

Chapter 3. ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING STAFF

Findings

There is a well-developed system for recognising the quality of staff research achievements in terms of research income and publications that is recognised in the individual reward structure.

There is a process for student feedback on teachers, but student engagement is low. The SER states that remedial action is taken if there is repeated negative evaluation, but this is not linked to the incentive structures.

There is evidence of professional development in terms of disciplinary and research skills but no evidence of pedagogical development either at induction or in the form of ongoing professional development.

Comments

In contrast to the situation with research, the main arbiter of teaching quality that is linked to individual staff reward is actually teaching quantity.

The percentage of students providing feedback on the courses is too low to provide reliable data on the opinions of whole cohorts.

Suggestions

The University should explore ways in which it can better measure teaching quality and link this to staff reward. It should also investigate factors such as the time demands on students made by feedback forms, the timing of their administration, and ways in which actions are communicated to students to ensure that they know that their feedback is valued.

The University should work to create a core of staff with expertise in pedagogy, in addition to their disciplinary skills, who can help lead enhancement in assessment processes and teaching delivery.

Evaluation in relation to Assessment Procedure 5

Less satisfactory

Chapter 4. ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Findings

The University has a new library which provides a good environment for individual study as well as rooms for small group collaborative work on the part of students. The library has a good range of books and journals, and access to databases including EBSCO Discovery on and off-site. The library also has a complete online catalogue of its book holdings both centrally and in departmental libraries.

There is a suggestion system for students. They can request books and these are bought by the library.

The intranet, based on Microsoft Sharepoint, and Virtual Learning Environment, based on Moodle, are not well-developed. The population of Moodle with student learning materials depends on individual staff enthusiasm and expertise. There is no strategy or timeline for the full development of Moodle.

Comments

It is unclear how students formally feedback on the quality of learning opportunities.

There are opportunities to create conditions which would favour self-directed learning, but this is not clearly encouraged by the curricular structure and its delivery.

There is no clear co-ordinated strategy for e-learning development at faculty or University levels.

Suggestions

The University should develop and implement an e-learning strategy, and rationalise the distribution of teaching materials between its different platforms. In parallel, it should develop a system for receiving feedback on its e learning platforms.

Given the University's recognition of the importance of the skill of sourcing and the evaluation of the quality of new information, the University should consider how its curriculum and e-learning platforms can better support the development of the self-directed learning skills necessary for lifelong learning.

Evaluation in relation to Assessment Procedure 6

Less satisfactory

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

Findings

The structures of the training programmes are determined by national and EU legislation. A recent project, focused on outcomes, identified three main categories: professional knowledge, professional skills and professional competence. Training supports the achievement of these outcomes, although they are not clearly linked to any assessment strategy. There is no clear evidence of changed structures across the years, from the first to the sixth, that aim at encouraging the development of lifelong learning skills. Training is linked on a year-by-year basis to ECTS credits with a minimum number of credits described in order to progress through the course.

There is a System for Quality Evaluation of Veterinary Training (SQEVT) and a process of student training quality assessment (STQA). However, students do not feel that they are participants in the actions taken and their monitoring. Various other stakeholder groups are able to input comments through the university management and examination processes. Certain stakeholders, in particular the State Veterinary Administration, make direct contact with University management to provide their views.

There is evidence of procedures at faculty level for monitoring the delivery of the curriculum and the teaching programme. How it is not always clear what actions have been taken or whether these achieve their aims.

There is no evidence of evaluation of the employability of students, or the levels of employment.

Comments

The SQEVT and the STQA sit alongside each other, but do not seem to have been designed to be complementary.

With the exception of the students, stakeholder feedback is not regularly and formally solicited. In particular, there are no regular surveys of graduates of the University. Similarly, although students were involved in a major way in the discussions on the new curriculum, other groups did not have the same input.

Suggestions

The University should review its faculty and University level structures for assessment of its training programmes. In particular, it should determine the measures which are most meaningful to its academic community, both staff and students, for concerns which they identify. It should aim to make its staff and student evaluations of its programmes complementary, and that the structures which exist at faculty level articulate well with those at University level.

The University should take measures to more formally obtain feedback from all its stakeholders, including its recent veterinary graduates.

The University should develop methods for evaluating the employability and the levels of employment of its graduates.

Evaluation in relation to Assessment Procedure 7

Less satisfactory

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

Findings

The university has a range of clinical and laboratory facilities that support its professional services that play a key role in student learning. Its farm meets Regional Veterinary Association standards, and its experimental animal facilities are accredited in accordance with national legislation. Specialised facilities and procedures include work with high risk biological agents and genetically modified organisms, under state supervision, and the use of ionising radiation, addictive substances, and hazardous chemical and substances, all overseen by appropriate university commissions which themselves are subject to state supervision.

Comments

There is no mention of certification of the diagnostic laboratories to any external performance standard.

Suggestions

The University is encouraged to develop its plans to obtain ISO assurance for the quality of its diagnostic laboratories. It is also encouraged to improve its systems for assessing the quality of its clinical services through direct client feedback, and a complaints system that captures lessons to be learned.

Evaluation in relation to Assessment Procedure 8

Satisfactory

Chapter 7. ASSESSMENT OF CONTINUING EDUCATION

Findings

The university provides a range of continuing education activities and responds to feedback from participants. This is used to ensure selection of individuals with both good scientific and good teaching skills to lead these courses wherever possible.

Comments

None

Suggestions

None

Evaluation in relation to Assessment Procedure 9

Satisfactory

Chapter 8. ASSESSMENT OF RESEARCH

Findings

The university conducts a variety of research, funded through various different income streams. It has mechanisms in place to measure and assure the quality of its research.

Comments

The University is to be commended on its strategy for the development of scientific excellence through collaborative research. The International Clinical Research Center programme has brought a number of large pieces of equipment to the Hospital, in particular advanced diagnostic imaging systems. The programme known as the Central European Institute of Technology is conceptually well-developed, focusing on interdisciplinary research and rewarding outputs that encourage productive, high quality scientific collaborations. It is well ahead of its targets for both publications and research students.

It is important that the University capitalises on these programmes so that they can benefit both its staff more generally and clinical veterinary students in terms of their knowledge of research processes and skills as researchers. There are also potential lessons to be learned about ways of incentivising and managing staff to ensure that their full potential is realised and that they are maximally productive on behalf of the University.

Suggestions

The university should consider how it can capture best practice from its collaborative ventures, and where possible extend this to other areas of its activity.

Evaluation in relation to Assessment Procedure 10

Satisfactory

Chapter 9. ASSESSMENT OF INTERNATIONALISATION OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Findings

The university demonstrates its dedication to internationalisation of education in a variety of ways including welcoming foreign students (total 23.1%) studying in both Czech and English (11.5%), short term exchanges in both directions (108 students out and 97 received), and the involvement of foreign specialists in its educational processes. The university is also involved in international research collaborations including the Central European Institute of Technology and an International Clinical Research Center, established at St Anne's University Hospital and linked to the US Mayo Foundation.

This internationalisation is a part of the university's long term plan, implemented by the Rector, his team and the faculties, and is overseen by the senior organs of the university.

Comments

None

Suggestions

None

Evaluation in relation to Assessment Procedure 11

Satisfactory

Chapter 10. ASSESSMENT OF COOPERATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS AND SOCIETY

Findings

The University runs a very popular series of Third Age programmes focused on senior members in society which is oversubscribed.

The University consults stakeholders, particularly the State Veterinary Administration over its plans. It also negotiates directly (and successfully) with government on its plans and the necessary financial support.

Comments

The University is to be commended on its Third Age Programme and the way it has engaged with government to secure capital funding to support its development plans.

A surprising omission in stakeholder consultations and feedback is the University's veterinary alumni.

Suggestions

The University should initiate a regular programme of surveying its graduates after they have been in work for 1-3 years, so that it can obtain information on employment patterns, developments in the profession in the Czech Republic and the currency of its teaching programmes.

Evaluation in relation to Assessment Procedure 12

Less satisfactory

Executive Summary

Satisfactory: AP3, AP8, AP9, AP10, AP11

Less satisfactory: AP4, AP5, AP6, AP7, AP12

Not Satisfactory: AP1, AP2

DOCUMENTS REQUESTED AND EVALUATED BY THE TEAM. IN ADDITION TO THE SELF-EVALUATION REPORTS AND OTHER SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS MENTIONED IN THE SER II THAT WERE SUPPLIED IN ADVANCE OF THE VISITATION.

1. Development project for 2011 Subroutine to promote quality of higher education (Un)
2. Doc 1 in Czech
3. Results of the evaluation of teaching quality by student WS 12/13 (Un)
4. Updating strategic plan 2013 (Un)
5. Updating strategic plan 2012 (Un)
6. Updating strategic plan 2011 (Un)
7. Updating strategic plan 2010 (FVM)
8. Doc 7 in Czech
9. Updating strategic plan 2012 (FVM)
10. Doc 10 in Czech
11. Updating strategic plan 2013 (FVM)
12. Doc 11 in Czech

13. Pedagogical activities 2011-12 (FVM)
14. Doc 14 in Czech
15. Long term plan 2011-15 (FVHE)
16. Strategic plan (FVHE)
17. Doc 16 in Czech
18. Strategic plan 2012 (FVHE)
19. Doc 18 in Czech
20. Strategic plan 2013 (FVHE)
21. Doc 20 in Czech
22. Pedagogical report 2011-12 (FVHE)
23. Report on scientific research 2012 (FVHE)
24. Scientific research activities 2012 (FVM)
25. Doc 24 in Czech
26. Doc 22 in Czech
27. Annual reports and evaluation of activities (FVHE) Czech
28. Report on teacher evaluation (FVHE) Czech
29. Small animal surgery and orthopaedics (mail for student) (Un)
30. General surgery and anaesthesiology (mail for student)(Un)
31. Procedure for drug storage (small animal hospital) Czech (Un)
32. Procedure for student safety and registration of unexpected events (Un) Czech
33. Module for accident registration (Un) Czech
34. Declaration of gynaecological status (Un)
35. Instruction for fire fighting (Un)
36. Instruction for safety – signed by student(Un)
37. Doc 36 in Czech
38. Realization of ICRC project (Un)
39. Request to purchase book(s) to the university library (Un)
40. Minute of the Council of veterinary education 11/10/13 (Un)
41. Minute of the Council of veterinary education 21/01/13 (Un)
42. Minute of the Council of veterinary education 27/03/13 (Un)
43. Minute of the Council of veterinary education 22/05/13 (Un)

44. Long term plan 2011-15 (FVM)
45. Doc 44 in Czech
46. Updating strategic plan 2011 (FVM)
47. Doc 46 in Czech
48. Updating strategic plan 2012 (FVM)
49. Doc 48 in Czech
50. Updates strategic plan 2013 (FVM)
51. Doc 50 in Czech
52. Annual economic report 2010 (FVM)
53. Annual report 2011 (FVM)

ECOVE DECISION:

2 serious shortcomings (no confidence) have been found.

- 1) Assessment procedure 1 (Policy statement)**
- 2) Assessment procedure 2 (Assessment of students)**

The status of the establishment is: no accreditation.