



RE-VISITATION REPORT

**To the Veterinary Education Establishment (VEE) of the University of Cordoba,
Cordoba, Spain**

On 26 – 28 October 2020

By the Re-visitation Team:

Olivier Glardon (Chairperson), Yverdon, Switzerland: Practitioner

Hans Henrik Dietz, Copenhagen, Denmark: ESEVT Coordinator

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Introduction

During the Visitation in March 2020, the Veterinary Education Establishment (VEE) was praised for several strong positions in the teaching of students, QA, and staff training. Following the ECOVE-approved site visit report, the VEE assigned the task of rectifying the single Major as well as the Minor Deficiencies to 6 different committees:

- the Teaching Commission
- the TPT Committee
- the Infrastructure Committee
- the Biosecurity Committee
- the Continuing Education (Training) Committee
- the Student Committee

The revising was affected by the Covid19-situation with a national Spanish lockdown one week after the Visitation.

Six Minor Deficiencies and one Major Deficiency (Non-compliance with Substandard 4.4 because night duties in emergency services are not compulsory for undergraduate students) were identified.

The RSER was provided on time and written in agreement with the SOP 2019. The follow-up on the Major and Minor Deficiencies was done by the VEE under difficult conditions due to Covid19 and the Re-visitation was prepared and organised perfectly despite the fact that the Covid19-situation was a major obstacle in preparing and completing the Visitation. The Chairperson was physically present in Cordoba during the RV and the Coordinator participated virtually in 8 separate meetings (1 for the Major Deficiency, and one for each of the 6 Minor Deficiencies, and the Exit Presentation). The virtual system applied was Cisco Webex, which worked flawlessly.

The ESEVT SOP 2019 is valid for this Re-visitation.

1. Correction of the Major Deficiencies

1.1. Major Deficiency 1:

Non-compliance with Substandard 4.4 because night duties in emergency services are not compulsory for undergraduate students

1.1.1. Findings

The VEE identified 3 main areas of concern with respect to the Major Deficiency:

- **Regulatory issues:** it was necessary to contact UCO Academic Secretariat and the Legal Advisory Unit to look for the proper regulatory framework allowing the students to perform night duty in emergencies ("out of the regular time frame") at the same level as any other training activity in the Veterinary Curriculum.
- **Insurance issues:** it was necessary to check if night duty in the VTH would be covered by the regular insurance programme of the students.
- **Academic issues:** it was needed to reorganise the TPT, to include night duties as compulsory training for all students in the VTH Itinerary and, if possible, in the Ambulatory Clinic Itinerary.

The Regulatory issues were solved ending with a resolution from the Rector "*to authorise students in the Veterinary Degree to carry out clinical training activities outside normal academic hours, including daytime and night-time hours in Emergency services of the Hospital. The schedule of these activities must be approved by the Veterinary Faculty Board and advertised with the normal schedule of the Degree in Veterinary Medicine*" and approved by the Faculty Board.

The Insurance Issues were solved in cooperation with the insurance agency leading to ordinary Scholar Insurance covering night activities since they are considered as compulsory practical training included in the Study Programme according to the Rector Resolution.

The Academic Issues were covered in great and relevant detail concluding that "*Night duties in emergencies for Equine and Companion animals will be included as compulsory training activity in the VTH Itinerary of the TPT*".

Further to this, the VEE took the opportunity to intensify the work done by the Spanish Deans of veterinary medicine to argue for an increase in the duration of the Spanish DVM curriculum with one semester to enable an increase in practical training. And also the distribution of training in D1C among the different subjects in the curriculum was introduced, but needs to be approved at a higher level.

1.1.2. Comments

The action taken by the VEE was very professional covering all aspects of the issue and including full follow-up on all matters related to the whole issue of introducing compulsory night duties. Furthermore, the whole process was considered fruitful by the VEE and used as a leverage for other valuable changes.

During the RV, the changes introduced were discussed and elaborated on. The system introduced is robust and covers the requirements in the Substandard.

1.1.3. Suggestions

None.

1.1.4. Decision

The Establishment has fully corrected the Major Deficiency.

2. Correction of the Minor Deficiencies

2.1. Minor Deficiency 1:

Partial compliance with Substandard 1.2. because of sub-optimal collaboration between the departments in order to ensure the consistency of the core curriculum

2.1.1. Findings

The VEE has introduced:

- Intra-Departmental Teaching Meetings covering basic features: Contents, Teaching Elements, and Assessment Methods to be reviewed in all subjects before approval of the Teaching Guides
- Annual Inter-Departmental Course Meetings for all departments involved in each course
- Thematic Meetings focused on specific matters in which review of teaching approaches of different subjects could be needed (including dimensions from terminology to new advances and technologies). Some of the topics to be prepared are:
 - o Digestive system diseases
 - o Respiratory system diseases
 - o Emerging diseases
 - o Therapeutic approaches
- Best Teaching Practices Workshops, for all Teaching Groups to share innovation projects and teaching resources

The Faculty Team and the Faculty Board was given the task of coordination and follow-up on reactivation of the existing bodies and entities with the responsibility of the teaching quality, and the development of new initiatives to promote interactions between professors, groups and Departments.

2.1.2. Comments

The issue has been professionally approached with appropriate solutions to the issue and several positive side effects. The changes have already been incorporated in the day-to-day running of the VEE. And it is noteworthy that the external stakeholders as well as the overlying university levels have been incorporated in the efforts.

2.1.3. Suggestions

None.

2.2. Minor Deficiency 2:

Partial compliance with Substandard 3.1 because of sub-optimal training of soft skills

2.2.1. Findings

Initially the EAEVE Working Group and the Teaching Committee analysed the curriculum, to identify areas where soft skills competences should/could be acquired by all students. These issues have already been approached in meetings held including the Degree Programme Coordinator, and Course Coordinators and the Teaching Committee inviting all the responsible professors of those subjects, to specifically discuss the teaching of soft skills in their subjects. A survey is to be performed between other professors, to evaluate the management of soft skills in other core subjects.

Currently, the basic soft skills competences are described as Basic and Transversal Competences and those competences are included in core subjects from the first to the fifth year of the studies. This list includes 16 subjects/areas covering the whole curriculum from basic sciences to dissertation thesis.

The correction is being performed both as a short-term action and a mid-term action. The mid-term action, focused on the complete revision of the competences, is the end goal. However, the short-term action is intended to offer an immediate improvement of the acquisition of soft skills.

2.2.2. Comments

It is commendable to launch a programme for a short-term revision and also add a long-term action making sure that the issue is permanently incorporated in the curriculum. Further to this, it is commendable to appoint a special “soft skills” coordinator to follow up on this issue.

Current examples of soft skills teaching e.g. communication and working-together were discussed to consider concrete examples of the changes imposed by the VEE.

2.2.3. Suggestions

It is suggested that the soft skills focus should be discussed with the external stakeholders and also covered by a follow up in the upcoming interim reports.

2.3. Minor Deficiency 3:

Partial compliance with Substandard 3.1.2 because of sub-optimal practical training in anatomy.

2.3.1. Findings

Five main issues were identified after the Visitation:

- The possibility for all students to physically dissect animal cadavers;
- The specific opportunities to perform some dissection on whole bovine or equine specimens;
- The teaching coordination with other subjects, closely related to anatomy (Pathology, General and Specific Anatomic Pathology);
- The performance and success rates of the subject and the difficulties of some students to pass;
- The investment in expanding the number of specimens in the Anatomy Museum, including models and whole animal specimens;
- The availability of the Museum for student revision of anatomy outside standard timetabled classes.

These points were discussed with relevant groups and the Vice Dean for academic affairs, and 6 specific action points were agreed upon including – at least one session (3 hours) of dissection of dogs and cats for all students; whole bovine or equine specimens to be used in practical sessions and allowing students to see dissections in those species, organising Teaching Coordination meetings between academic staff in charge of Anatomy practical’s and General Pathological Anatomy practical’s (necropsies), a specific Teaching Innovation Project to be developed using videos and a photographic atlas, establishing a follow-up programme to guarantee there is no imbalance between the success rates of the two subjects that make up the anatomy unit and other actions mentioned in the RSER. These require annual coordination meetings with teaching staff responsible for analysing the results of each course, diagnosing difficulties and trying to make changes to improve them.

However, one critical point for the improvement of practical training in anatomy is the availability of cadavers and anatomic material, which is also the case for cadavers for necropsies.

2.3.2. Comments

The VEE has taken considerable steps to alleviate the situation but it remains an issue for constant focus to keep up the number of cadavers for student dissections.

For the time being, these are sufficient measures having been taken.

3.2.3. Suggestions

It is suggested to follow up on the issue of access to cadavers for dissection and necropsy in the upcoming interim reports.

2.4. Minor Deficiency 4:

Partial compliance with Substandard 4.8 because of non-optimal biosecurity procedures in transportation of students to/from food-producing animal facilities

2.4.1. Findings

A number of actions have been taken on this issue including:

- Hygienic precautions in the vehicle including cleaning, disinfection and separation of the PPE used, adequate ventilation of the passenger compartment, correct hand hygiene and the prohibition of smoking, drinking or eating inside the vehicles;
- Biosafety and prevention equipment is detailed. Among the main requirements are: a first aid kit, hydroalcoholic gel, material and products for cleaning, disinfection and separation of the PPE used.
- A procedure for cleaning and disinfecting vehicles with detailed instruction for washing the exterior, cleaning the interior surfaces after each use and the operations of brushing, disinfecting and vacuum cleaning the cabin;
- Records and evidence have been created for this purpose. Before departure the biosafety and prevention equipment must be checked and verified, leaving a record of it with the indication of the person or persons who carried it out, date and registration of the vehicle. Likewise, a record of the periodic cleaning and disinfection indicating the person or persons who carried out the cleaning and disinfection and the vehicle's registration number is filed.

2.4.2. Comments

A comprehensive set of procedures has been established to correct this deficiency. This includes a "Biosecurity Protocol for FAVEUCO Vehicles" written in accordance with the general biosecurity regulations of the VEE.

2.4.3. Suggestions

None.

2.5. Minor Deficiency 5:

Partial compliance with Substandard 7.5 because of sub-optimal mechanisms in place to reduce the abnormally-long duration of the study programme for many students

2.5.1. Findings

The average length of the Veterinary studies in all Faculties of Spain range between 5,5 and 6,5 years. In FAVEUCO the average in the three previous years is 6,06. Approximately one-third of the students spent more than six years in FAVEUCO.

These numbers, and the fact that some students spend an abnormally long time to complete the Veterinary Degree, have been already analysed by the FAVEUCO QAU.

The first point studied was the legal framework of the student progression. As reported in the SER (page 103), the progression criteria and procedures for all students are established in the UCO's Academic Regulatory Framework for Grades, which clearly and precisely sets out the rules for student academic progression:

- Minimum number of ECTS for progression within the curriculum for full-time students, as well as for part-time students;

- Official examination sessions (two) for each subject per year, and up to a maximum of six examination sessions per subject;
- Progress within the curriculum, students with failed subjects;
- Total period of time available to complete the degree for full-time students (nine years) for part-time students (thirteen years).

In the UCO Veterinary Degree the requirement of having passed some specific subject to enrol in another one (what is called “key subjects”) has been identified as potential cause of limitation.

Considering those legal limitations, the QAU identified three dimensions in which correcting mechanisms could be implemented:

- The review of the "**key subjects**". Within the scope of the application of the FAVEUCO Strategic Plan, in its Strategic Axis number 1 (Teaching), in action "Revision of the Curriculum", a study was carried out, in collaboration with the students' representatives. Some of the "key subjects" were identified as possible factors for the long duration of the studies. The QAU contacted the Departments and responsible professors involved, and an agreement was reached that led to minor modifications to the curriculum, eliminating some of the academic incompatibilities.
- The **follow-up of subjects according to performance and success rates**. Each semester, QAU checks all the completed subjects and categorises those with higher rates of failed students (according to the rates included in the VERIFICA document). Responsible professors of those subjects are informed and, in some cases, corrections measures can be applied.
- The **follow-up of students approaching limit situations**. The QAU has established an informatics system to analyse the results of the qualifications each semester and to detect those students with more than five official examination sessions consumed or reaching more than six and a half years in the Degree. The data from the previous two years are recorded in the minutes of the QAU sessions and are communicated to the Faculty Board and Teaching Commission. The Vice-dean of Students Relationship individually contacts those students, and each particular situation is particularly studied.

2.5.2. Comments

The issue has been professionally approached with appropriate steps taking the legal framework into consideration.

2.5.3. Suggestions

A follow-up on dropout rates and students with less effective study progress should be constantly monitored and acted upon.

2.6. Minor Deficiency 6:

Partial compliance with Substandard 9.1 because of sub-optimal training to teach and to assess for the temporary staff involved with teaching

2.6.1. Findings

According to the Spanish regulations, part-time teachers must be professionals whose primary work is outside the university, as is the case for most professors who are in charge of the Tutored Practical Training subject (practitioners hired by the UCO who are in charge of ambulatory clinics, professionals from livestock enterprises, professionals from the Public Health system). Although the

UCO has a permanent continuing education and training programme for the academic staff, the courses offered usually do not meet the training needs of these part-time teachers, who are hired for specific teaching purposes.

To address this issue, the FAVEUCO is implementing a new educational programme to facilitate the training on teaching and assessment of that academic staff. The training programme includes:

- An "**Initial Training Session**" at the beginning of the academic year that is addressed to new part-time teachers. The main objective of this session is to define the teaching objectives of the practical activities to be carried out, the alignment of the skills that students must acquire through those practical sessions with the Day-One Competences and, the best suited assessment methodologies for those activities. The organization of the "Initial Training Session" will be in charge of the FAVEUCO Team that will be advised by the Training Committee.
- Two "**Specific Training Sessions**" per year (one in each semester) specifically aimed at all part-time teachers. These sessions will focus on student's assessment and methodologies to promote the active learning of students with an integrative approach. The Training Committee of the FAVEUCO will be responsible for organizing the specific training sessions with the support of the Teaching Quality Office of the UCO.
- A "**Virtual Training Course**" in the Moodle platform, with supportive material for the training sessions and with different modules for relevant topics. Specific contents according to detected needs will be prepared by the Teaching Committee after discussion with temporary staff.

2.6.2. Comments

The issue has been professionally approached with appropriate solutions in the near future. Noteworthy is that the external stakeholders have been incorporated in the efforts and will take advantage of the Moodle and other type of training sessions.

2.6.3. Suggestions

It is suggested to continue and expand the cooperation with external stakeholders to improve and enlarge the training programmes.

3. ESEVT Indicators

3.1. Findings

Given the short time since the full Visitation, the actions taken have not changed the indicators.

3.2. Comments

None.

3.3. Suggestions

None.

4. Conclusions

The Major Deficiency (Non-compliance with Substandard 4.4 because night duties in emergency services are not compulsory for undergraduate students) identified after the full Visitation on 02 – 06 March 2020 has been fully corrected.

Decision of ECOVE

The Committee concluded that the Major Deficiency identified after the full Visitation on 02 – 06 March 2020 had been corrected.

The Veterinary Education Establishment (VEE) of the University of Cordoba is therefore classified as holding the status of: **ACCREDITATION**.