

**European Association
of Establishments for Veterinary Education**

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



**REPORT on the RE-VISITATION
to the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine of the University of León**

27-28/03/2017

by the EXPERT GROUP :

Chairperson :

CHAMBON Thierry, Brest, France

ESEVT Coordinator :

SPINU Marina, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Introduction

The FVMULE (Faculty of Veterinary Medicine of the University of León) Leon, Spain was evaluated by ESEVT in 1-5 December 2014.

The previous Visitation team considered that the Establishment was lacking strategy for solving its identified weaknesses, there was insufficient profitability of the clinical and other services (diagnostic, expert, research...) and also insufficient compulsory hands-on clinical training in all species, there was a lack of a business plan to develop and manage the VTH, the VTH had an insufficient caseload and there were too few equine necropsies. Similarly, in food-producing animals there was a lack of 24h ambulatory clinic, and also a lack of computerised clinical database. The day-one skills and competences of the students were not evaluated systematically. The storage of controlled drugs was not compliant with Good Pharmacy/Clinical Practices. At staff level, the team identified a lack of recruitment of young teaching staff during the last decade and also a low number of support staff in the VTH. The number of European College registered residency programmes was insufficient.

These findings led to the identification of 3 Major Deficiencies:

1. Lack of strategic plan for the Establishment and especially for its VTH;
2. Insufficient case load in all species and as a consequence, insufficient compulsory hands-on clinical training;
3. Insufficient exposure to emergency cases;

The Committee also notes from the SER that the number of equine necropsy is extremely low.

The ECOVE Final decision was NON APPROVAL, issued on May 2015.

The Re-Visitation Self Evaluation Report (Interim Report) was provided on time to the Re-Visitation Team and provided relevant information.

The Re-visitacion was well prepared and well organised by the Establishment. It was performed in agreement with the ESEVT 2012 (Budapest) SOP.

1. Correction of major deficiencies

1.1. Major Deficiency 1 ('Lack of strategic plan for the Establishment and especially for its VTH')

1.1.1. Findings

At the moment of the 2014 visit, in spite of the fact that the Establishment's SER described in detailed general objectives and the "day-one knowledge, skills and competences to be acquired" by the students at FVMULE, a real strategic plan on the future development of the Faculty, with concrete action plans and deadlines was missing. Therefore, in 2015 the Establishment set in place the "Strategic Plan for the Faculty and VTH 2015-2020". The Establishment was subject to the accreditation process carried out at national level by ACSUCYL (national accreditation body, member of ENQA) and received a positive result the week before the re-visitacion by EAEVE.

During the process of designing the Strategic plan of the Establishment five major strategic areas were identified:

1. Teaching and Learning
2. Clinical teaching activities - Veterinary Teaching Hospital
3. Research activities
4. Dissemination to Society
5. Resources and infrastructures

These areas were identified based on a SWOT analyses at the establishment and VTH level and the Strategic plan was designed based on several European and national documents.

For each major focus point identified, clear strategic objectives were designed and subdivided, with action plans, timetable, responsible and also compliance indicators defined. In the Teaching and Learning area, specific objectives were set for graduate, postgraduate and continuing education levels.

As such, the Establishment submitted a request, issued together with all Spanish faculties asking for an eleven semester teaching programme for the Veterinary Degree (330 ECTS), still pending because of political changes at country level. To improve the clinical training, the Establishment aimed at the reduction of the number of new enrolling students in the Veterinary Degree from 120 to 100 and increasing the number of collaborating veterinarians (associate professors) for the external practical work. The improvement of the curriculum is subject to a periodical evaluation.

Design of a new curriculum for the Master in Research, professionalising master programmes, expand lifelong learning opportunities for veterinarians and Proposals for organizing conferences, courses and seminars are some of the strategies aiming to improve the teaching at master level.

The second strategic area includes the Veterinary Teaching Hospital, which is subject to substantial improvement in short, medium and long terms in the fields of organization, infrastructures and business plan, caseload in small and large animals and involvement of the students in emergencies. Thus, final settlement of the juridical status, the adequate development of the operational regulations, a new economic strategy and marketing policy, implementation of some novel clinical and diagnostic services, computerizing the clinical information/data resulted in improvement of the customer service. Similarly, the caseload in small and large animals increased and also the student involvement in the surgeries, mobile clinic service and exposure to emergency cases. The strategic activities of the VTH also include for the future development of a postgraduate diploma, consolidation of the research in veterinary sciences and biomedicine, as well as optimizing the human resource. In the Research strategic area, encouragement of the research activity of the FVMULE and its dissemination to students, departments and research groups are the main objectives. All these are meant to strengthen the presence of the FVMULE in the ULE and in the Regional Government of Castilla and León and to encourage collaboration activities of the FVMULE with other academic or private institutions. Teaching and research staff improvement and also infrastructure expanding and development are important goals for the FVMULE.

1.1.2. Comments

The SER presented the full strategic plan and how it will be implemented, including who was responsible and the timeline to deliver the plan. Since the last Visitation in 2014, the Establishment has made great efforts to set in place and improve its strategic plan, very clearly aiming to develop the level of training and services provided by its VTH. The team appreciated the effort the establishment has made to change the culture towards the importance of strategy in the progress of FVMULE.

1.1.3. Suggestions

None

1.1.4. Decision of the Re-Visitation Team

The Major Deficiency 1 ('Lack of strategic plan for the Establishment and especially for its VTH') has been corrected.

1.2. Major Deficiency 2 ('Insufficient case load in all species and as a consequence, insufficient compulsory hands-on clinical training')

1.2.1. Findings

As stated in the SER, the Establishment implemented several measures to increase the caseload and to improve the students' clinical hands-on training at FVMULE. The number of enrolling students was reduced from 120 in 2015/2016 to 105 in 2016-2017 and will further decrease for 2017/2018 to 100 students, thus increasing the clinical cases/ students' numbers ratio. "Introduction to Veterinary", a new subject since 2016 allows the 1st year students to participate in the activity of the VTH, attending in groups of two, for 4 hours over the weekend, the small and large animal hospitalization area.

The organization and the infrastructures of the VTH were remodelled and a new business plan and marketing policy are in place. The VTH services and prices were advertised to the veterinarians and clinics by sending information about the VTH to the professional associations, institutions and organizations in the field and through the media, the web page and the use of social networks. The VTH improved its service scale by introducing oncology haematology, cell therapy, vascular and interventional radiology, reproduction and obstetrics techniques, digital-3D prosthetic reconstruction in amputated animals, using new equipment (monitors, optical instruments, etc.).

The VTH introduced a 24/7 veterinary service, encouraging the direct involvement of the students in emergency cases and involving them in the monitoring of the number and type of emergency cases received at the hospital. The number of veterinary practitioners collaborating in the Mobile Clinic increased and also the Establishment signed agreements with private clinics that would refer the emergencies to the VTH. The agreements with animal protection societies, Institutions and Associations related to wild and exotic animals at regional level as well as associations of practitioners working on small animals, private clinics for the referral of cases, residencies, refugees and other small animals' centres all led to an increase in the caseload in small animals.

Improved administration of the VTH, through the recruitment of two full-time staff and also the increase in the number of interns and resident veterinarians, 5 of first and 5 of second years, enhanced the simultaneous management of more numerous cases at VTH by students, under supervision (5 students/group). Simple surgeries are mandatory to be performed by each student during the clinical rotations. Recruitment of nationally accredited clinical veterinarians (AVEPA) in Soft Tissues Surgery, Traumatology, Anesthesiology, Diagnostic Imaging for the purposes of the VTH increased the number of referral cases. The incorporation of a specialist from the Royal College of United Kingdom in Critical Care and Emergencies will contribute to the promotion of the Emergency Service of the VTH.

The numbers of veterinarians for farm animals and equine clinical training increased by recruitment of external professionals and implementing clinical rotations dedicated to farm animals and equine. The coordination of the activities of the Mobile Clinic Service and the VTH along with the improvement of the infrastructures and staff for the Mobile Clinic Service led to an improved and more hands-on clinical training for farmed animals. The number of cases of large animals also increased subsequent to the increase of number of days spent in the ambulatory clinic (from 5 to 8) and the number of veterinarians hired for these activities (from 4.5 to 8). The longer period spent on the farm and the one vet/one student based working relationship exposed the student in the last year of studies to a higher number of cases.

The Establishment signed agreements with the Consortium for Sheep Promotion, thus involving the students in animal health issues under the supervision of a Consortium veterinarian. The VTH could carry out the sanitary control and monitoring on farms in the province based on contracts signed by the Establishment.

The number of cases increased during the two past years with 126% in companion animals, 52% in equine, 470% in ruminants and swine, 64% in the ambulatory clinic. Time spent by each student on extramural large animal medicine consultations increased due to clinical rotations in smaller groups or 1 student/1 teacher bases

1.2.2. Comments

There was a substantial increase in the caseload of both small and large animals at the VTH and also during the clinical rotations ad ambulatory clinic due to the broad spectrum of measures taken by the establishment.

1.2.3. Suggestions

The team would encourage the leadership of the Establishment and of the VTH to further pursue the goal of establishing a European Residency that could stabilize the caseload in large animals.

1.2.4. Decision of the Re-Visitation Team

The Major Deficiency 2 ('Insufficient case load in all species and as a consequence, insufficient compulsory hands-on clinical training') has been corrected.

1. 3. Major Deficiency 3 ('Insufficient exposure to emergency cases. The Committee also notes from the SER that the number of equine necropsy in extremely low.')

1.3.1. Findings

Some measures were taken, already mentioned under the corrections concerning Major deficiencies 1 and 2 (i.e., decreasing the numbers of the students, increasing the number of collaborating veterinarians, etc.), also aiming at improving the exposure of the students to emergency cases. The introduction by VTH of a 24/7 veterinary service program led to an increased number of emergency cases seen by students from 12 in 2013/2014 to 192 the academic year 2015/2016. Similarly, the number of days spent by students with the ambulatory clinic (clinical rotations) also increased the exposure to emergency cases.

Not only the changes in the students' program, but also the restructuring of the Emergency service itself, where two residents are present 24/7 and one surgeon is present when needed (on-call) helped the establishment in increasing the emergency caseload. The students are called by their supervisors for the clinical rotation, in case emergencies occur on the farms.

Recently (2016/2017) the number of equine necropsies increased following the agreement with the company in charge of collecting the equine bodies in the region. Furthermore, the VTH hired lately a veterinarian for equine necropsies, involved in a European residency program in Veterinary Pathology. The improvement at the necropsy room level allows the students to perform more necropsies in equine (already 10 in the academic year 2016-17)

1.3.2. Comments

By applying numerous measures, including changes in strategy the establishment accomplished so far and is aiming at improving the student exposure to emergency cases, which also stands for the seriousness of the staff's involvement in student education.

1.3.3. Suggestions

None

1.3.4. Decision of the Re-Visitation Team

The Major Deficiency 3 (‘Insufficient exposure to emergency cases; The Committee also notes from the SER that the number of equine necropsy in extremely low’) has been corrected.

2. Correction of the Minor Deficiencies

2.1. Minor deficiency 1 “Lack of Establishment’s strategy for solving its identified weaknesses”

2.1.1. Findings

This minor deficiency was dealt with under Major deficiency 1.

2.1.2. Comments

See under 1.1.2.

2.1.3. Suggestions

None

2.2. Minor deficiency 2 “Insufficient profitability of the clinical and other services (diagnostic, expert, research ...)”

2.2.1. Findings

The team considered that the establishment corrected this minor deficiency by implementing a new economic strategy for the VTH, by including new services provided the VTH (oncology, haematology, ...) by signing an agreement for financial support with the local Government and by closing cooperation agreements with institutions and private companies. As a result, the income of the VTH increased with 61.63% between 2013/2014 and 2015/2016.

2.2.2. Comments

By providing more diversified services and by maintaining the 24/7 program, increasing the caseload, the team is confident that the VTH will become economically efficient.

2.2.3. Suggestions

None

2.3. Minor deficiency 3 “Insufficient caseload in the VTH and equine necropsies”

2.3.1. Findings

This minor deficiency was dealt with under Major deficiencies 2 and 3.

2.3.2. Comments

See under 1.2.2. and 1.3.2.

2.3.3. Suggestions

See under 1.2.3.

2.4. Minor deficiency 4 “Lack of business plan for the development and management of the VTH”

2.4.1. Findings

This minor deficiency was dealt with under Major deficiency 1.

2.4.2. Comments

See under 1.1.2.

2.4.3. Suggestions

None

2.5. Minor deficiency 5 “Storage of controlled drugs not compliant with Good Pharmacy/Clinical Practices”

2.5.1. Findings

In Spain, the legislation does not require the presence of a professional pharmacist in Veterinary hospitals, since there is no processing of drugs, just internal use for the hospital needs. Nevertheless, the team found that the storage and distribution of drugs is being performed in accordance with good pharmaceutical or clinical practice. The storage is accomplished by pharmacy boxes, where the drugs in use are stored except opiates and narcotics and by drug storage cabinets, located in the Hospitalization area, depositing the drugs necessary for the Intensive Care Unit. Access to both is restricted to designated personal and records are in place so that nothing can be removed without being registered. Furthermore, there is a veterinarian and a pharmacist from the Department of Pharmacology that help keeping good practices in place.

2.5.2. Comments

None

2.5.3. Suggestions

None

2.6. Minor deficiency 6 “Lack of real 24h ambulatory clinic in food-producing animals”

2.6.1. Findings

This minor deficiency was dealt with under Major deficiency 3.

2.6.2. Comments

See under 1.3.2

2.6.3. Suggestions

None

2.7. Minor deficiency 7 “Insufficient compulsory hands-on clinical training in all species”

2.7.1. Findings

This minor deficiency was dealt with under Major deficiency 2.

2.7.2. Comments

See under 1.2.2.

2.7.3. Suggestions

See under 1.2.3.

2.8. Minor deficiency 8 “Low number of support staff in the VTH”

2.8.1. Findings

The staff at the VTH increased in numbers after 2014 by hiring two people in the administration-reception area, one full time radiologist and also two full-time and one part-time caretakers. The VTH Director also intends to create another permanent equine caretaker position, by employing full time the actual caretaker that works part time now.

2.8.2. Comments

The VTH leadership is strongly committed to improve the number of support staff employed full-time, since according to the strategy, the caseload will increase progressively.

2.8.3. Suggestions

The team encourages the Director of the VTH to further implement the Strategic Plan of the FVMULE and further improve the support staff area by attracting young people.

2.9. Minor deficiency 9 “Lack of systematic evaluation of the day-one skills and competences”

2.9.1. Findings

Recently, the establishment has been accredited by the ACSUCYL Quality Assurance Agency for the University System in Castilla y León, which is a member of ENQA. The evaluation also included the students’ activities, day one skills and overall results monitoring. Since the last Evaluation Visitation in 2014, a logbook is in place, where the students’ skills are monitored during the 5th year rotation system in the clinics and also on the farms. This logbook also serves as an “attendance notebook, work diary”, where the students describe what they have performed and the teacher verifies the conformity of the activities. Also, when finishing a clinical rotation, the students have to write reports which are double checked by the teacher or supervising veterinarian and also by the Vice Dean responsible for contracts with the farms.

2.9.2. Comments

None

2.9.3. Suggestions

None

2.10. Minor deficiency 10 “Lack of computerized clinical database”

2.10.1. Findings

Setting up a computerised database is being dealt with in Strategic Objective 2.1.8. The database is already in place and it includes the information gathered during the clinical activities. The management software is GESTORVET and data is being introduced by the administrative staff. The digitalisation of the retrospective clinical sheets is still in progress and two 5th year students, holding a scholarship work on this. The backup for this database is in the cloud storage. And the network is accessible in each consultation room.

The database is available for teachers holding a code and for students to do their research, under the supervision of the two 5th year students. The database students can access is a parallel one, where the owner information stays confidential. Nevertheless, upon request and a good reasoning all data is available to students who do research.

2.10.2. Comments

None

2.10.3. Suggestions

The VTH team should speed up the digitalisation of the data recorded on paper, to improve the access to and the use of the information.

2.11. Minor deficiency 11 “Lack of recruitment of young teaching staff during the last decade”

2.11.1. Findings

The policy of the Spanish government, influenced by the economic crisis, led to the increasing average age of the teaching staff at FVMULE. Usually, the graduates leave the country after obtaining a PhD in Spain, for a postdoctoral stage and eventually they come back and apply for further support by the local or national government, which is a very competitive process. Still, the situation seems to have been improving lately, when the establishment was able to hire two young assistant professors in Food Technology and Physiology. Meanwhile, part time associate professors are being hired. The VTH also managed to employ five veterinarians.

2.11.2. Comments

Due to national legislation, the employment process seems to be very difficult in FVMULE and all the Spanish schools, a difficulty which FVMULE tries sometimes to overcome from its own resources.

2.11.3. Suggestions

The team encourages the establishment to continue its work on employing young teaching staff.

2.12. Minor deficiency 12 “Insufficient number of European College registered residency programs”

2.12.1. Findings

Since the last EAEVE visit, the number of European diplomats increased with two. Furthermore, a person involved in a residency program for the diploma of the European College of Animal Pathology and also the procedure to hire a diplomat from the European College of Veterinary Surgeons of Large Animals was initiated, with a perspective of a new residency program.

2.12.2. Comments

None

2.12.3. Suggestions

The establishment should speed up establishing new residency programs, thus increasing the caseload, emergencies and improving the services in the clinics.

As the team focused on the 2014 major deficiencies (Budapest SOP) the ESEVT indicators have not been recalculated.

3. Conclusion

The Re-Visitation Team considers that the Major Deficiencies identified during the Visitation done in October 2014 (i.e. ‘Lack of strategic plan for the Establishment and especially for its VTH; Insufficient case load in all species and as a consequence, insufficient compulsory hands-on clinical training; Insufficient exposure to emergency cases; The Committee also notes from the SER that the number of equine necropsy in extremely low) have all been addressed and corrected by the Establishment to the satisfaction of the team, and therefore the team recommends to ECOVE the status of Approval for the FVMULE.

Annex 1 Decision of ECOVE

The Committee concluded that the Major Deficiencies identified in 2014 had been rectified.

The 'Faculty of Veterinary Medicine of the University of León' is classified after Re-Visitation as holding the status of **APPROVAL**.