

# Veterinary Education in the PVS Pathway

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## Summary

Recent health events have highlighted weaknesses in the ways in which zoonotic diseases are controlled and epidemics are managed. Moreover, they have underlined the need to increase knowledge and education of how future health threats can be monitored, and ultimately mitigated.

High quality veterinary education plays a pivotal role in providing the public and private sectors of animal health systems with the adequate knowledge and skills to perform effectively and support Veterinary Services competently. The prominence of veterinary education in the PVS Pathway correlates to the necessity to develop veterinary curricula around the world that address global challenges to not only animal, but human health.

Following the recommendations of successive Global Conferences, organised by the OIE, on veterinary education, the OIE has in recent years refined tools to contribute to the reduction of disparities in the provision of education and its impact on veterinary students.

**Keywords:** Veterinary education – OIE PVS Pathway – Veterinary Services – Veterinary Statutory Bodies – veterinary para-professionals

## Introduction

The OIE 'Performance of Veterinary Services' (PVS) Pathway is a continuous process, through which the compliance of national Veterinary Services with the intergovernmental standards of the OIE and their sustainability are assessed. Since its conception in 2006, assessment missions and capacity building initiatives, divided under 'diagnosis', 'prescription', and 'treatment' stages of the PVS Pathway, have enabled OIE Member Countries to develop their animal health systems by targeting assistance to areas in which their governance mechanisms can be strengthened. Participation in the PVS Pathway is entirely voluntary and conditional to an official request from a country to the OIE.

As of 1 June 2016, more than 75% of OIE Member Countries worldwide have requested an external initial OIE PVS Evaluation mission. The outcomes of a number of these missions have underlined concerns over the quality of veterinary education provided at Veterinary Education Establishments notably in developing countries. The lack of modern veterinary curricula, both initial and continuing, in certain countries has hindered the performance of national Veterinary Services to correctly implement the standards required of safeguarding animal health and welfare, and respond to health challenges at the animal-human interface.

## Veterinary Education in the PVS Pathway

As a 'treatment' to progressively remedy the discrepant levels of initial veterinary education around the world, the OIE has developed *Recommendations on the Competencies of Graduating Veterinarians ('Day 1 graduates') to Assure National Veterinary Services of Quality* (1), to harmonise the competencies for the delivery of robust animal health services. The recommendations detail the specific and advance competencies ('Day 1 Competencies') that a veterinary student should acquire upon graduation, and serve as a foundation enriched by further education and professional experience.

To assist Veterinary Education Establishments with integrating these Competencies into their veterinary curriculum, the OIE has published *Guidelines on Veterinary Education Core Curriculum* (2). The Model Core Veterinary Curriculum contained in these guidelines supports the development and implementation of veterinary curriculum. They are to ensure that students are being educated to the level of competency expected of them, and are, more importantly, meeting the necessary competencies.

To further the implementation of the OIE Day 1 Competencies and Model Core Veterinary Curriculum, and their correct application, the OIE has expanded its concept of 'twinning' to Veterinary Education Establishments. Twinning has been recognised by the OIE as a mechanism through which institutional capacity can be amplified, and best practices be fostered.

The OIE Veterinary Education Twinning Programme provides the opportunity for Veterinary Education Establishments to solidify existing partnerships between developed and developing countries to improve the quality of veterinary education and the way in which it is taught. The programme is moreover furthering the understanding of the global threshold of initial veterinary education, and enabling efforts to be directed at strengthening the educational capacities of Veterinary Education Establishments where they are most needed.

Projects under the programme are undertaken by a recognised Veterinary Education Establishment, the 'Parent' and a 'Beneficiary' Veterinary Education Establishment, for an average of 2 to 3 years. The specific objectives and activities for each project are defined by the Parent and Beneficiary in consultation with the OIE.

To date, activities have included faculty and student exchanges, training workshops, mapping exercises, and the development of online learning modules. Modernised teaching methods, through twinning, have shown to stimulate learning and greater levels of student participation. Parents and Beneficiaries are demonstrating strong ownership of projects, and engaging government and relevant stakeholders in the development of education. Certain projects are, moreover, leveraging in-kind financial contributions, which are enabling complementary activities or costs that are otherwise ineligible under the OIE Veterinary Education Twinning Programme to be financed.

The OIE has recently updated its *Guide to Veterinary Education Twinning Projects* (3), which provides an overview of the processes of preparing a twinning project, and the respective roles of each actor involved. As of 1 June 2016, 9 projects are underway, 5 project proposals are under development, and 2 recent expressions of interest have been received by the OIE.

### **Veterinary Statutory Bodies**

To ensure the excellence of the veterinary profession, powers are entrusted to Veterinary Statutory Bodies (or their equivalent) to oversee the professional capacity of veterinarians. The *OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code* (4) defines the functions of a Veterinary Statutory Body, which include the licensing and registering of veterinary professionals, and provision of minimum standards for education (initial and continuing), and professional conduct of veterinarians and veterinary para-professionals.

The quality of veterinary education is therefore largely dependent on the standards issued by Veterinary Statutory Bodies and their support of developing education to enhance the performance of national Veterinary Services.

### **Veterinary Para-professionals**

The reliance on veterinary para-professionals for the performance of routine clinical, surveillance, and laboratory duties, particularly in precarious rural communities and developing countries, is strong. Veterinary para-professionals are key to supporting veterinarians and their role in delivering effective veterinary services.

To strengthen the training currently offered to veterinary para-professionals, the OIE, in collaboration with relevant partners, is considering the development of minimum Day 1 Competencies and a Core Curriculum for the main categories of veterinary para-professionals that exist. These tools will be developed in compliance with international standards and requirements for certified veterinary para-professionals, and specifically target countries that do not have existing para-professional certifications.

## **Conclusion**

Education has long been regarded as a vehicle for sustainable development. Efforts to enhance veterinary education have therefore been viewed as a necessity to provide future veterinarians with the fundamental competencies required for sustaining animal and human health.

As a stepping stone towards the strengthening of national Veterinary Services, veterinary education in the PVS Pathway is enabling educational strides to be made in improving veterinary curricula through the OIE recommendations and guidelines on veterinary education, and the OIE Veterinary Education Twinning Programme.

Whilst recognising the value of veterinarians and their responsibilities, Veterinary Statutory Bodies and veterinary para-professionals must also be commended for their support to and delivery of national Veterinary Services. Recent discussions have called for the functional capacities of Veterinary Statutory Bodies to be enhanced and minimum competencies for veterinary para-professionals to be progressed so as to further the efficiency of the overall veterinary workforce.

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## **References**

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