

## **Challenges for accreditation: how to harmonise mechanisms at the global level and how to adopt OIE guidelines in the mechanisms**

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Over the past 30 years, quality of veterinary teaching was developed with the raise of accreditation of Veterinary Education Establishments (VEEs). Veterinary teaching establishments are now evaluated under the supervision of different bodies, for example the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE), the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), Australasian Veterinary Board Council (AVBC) and South African Veterinary Council (SAVC). Other accreditation bodies are active all over the world and some new organisations are under construction. An International Accrediting Working Group (IAWG) was convened to encourage discussion and exchange amongst these accrediting bodies.

The principles used for the evaluation process are quite similar. Each accreditation body is acknowledged by an official organisation either national or international and relies upon rules precisely described in standard operating procedures. Standards are adopted for different topics, each establishment is requested to provide a Self Evaluation Report (SER) prior to the evaluation. Experts, appointed by the accrediting bodies, are in charge of analysis of compliance with the standards. The expert report is then transferred to an independent body which decides whether the establishment should be approved or not. Status of the establishments and reports from the experts visit are completely transparent.

The standards cover the key components for implementation of veterinary education. They include requirements on organisation and strategy of the school, the curriculum, faculty members and staff, students, facilities and equipment, teaching materials (including animals), research and continuous and postgraduate education. In each standard, state of the art foundations are described in order to guarantee that all graduates meet the Day 1 competencies required by state licensing bodies. Each standard includes quality measurements to ensure the follow-up of outcomes assessment of the graduating vets and continuous improvement of the quality of teaching.

Even if the standards are comparable among accreditation bodies, they often include important specific criteria and highlight some points to meet the needs of a particular country or region. The IAWG meetings are then not dedicated only to set the same standards worldwide, but focus more on exchanging practice, developing mutual knowledge and increasing harmonisation of the evaluation systems. These discussions are supplemented by agreements between accrediting bodies to plan visits and to accept observers during some of these visits. For example, the upcoming evaluation of a Perth veterinary faculty in July 2016 will include as many as XXX experts from different accrediting bodies in order to strengthen mutual understanding.

The development of the OIE recommendations on the Day 1 competencies of graduating veterinarians assure National Veterinary Services of quality and refer to the OIE specific focus on safeguarding animal health and public health through qualified Veterinary Services. These competencies are devoted to developing the One Health approach and were supported by the OIE state members after proposal by the OIE adhoc group for vet education. They represent a foundation on which national needs and circumstances could be built. To this extent they are included in standards of each specific accreditation systems.

As the evaluation process of a VEE conducted by international accreditation bodies evaluates compliance with the standards, in the context of ensuring fulfilment of the Day 1 competencies of new graduates, it is important to offer opportunities to follow-up such fulfilment even for VEEs which are not members of one of the accrediting bodies. Some of them are already engaged in supporting the OIE and VEE on a voluntary basis to implement the guidelines on Veterinary Education Core Curriculum. This is the case for EAEVE, which promotes consultative visits based on its standards and experts, visiting VEEs upon request and providing

advice about compliance with the EAEVE standards which incorporate the OIE guidelines. This opens the opportunity for VEEs from developing countries to receive feedback in order to develop a strategy to reach, maintain or increase their educational level in compliance with international minimum standards of quality. Other international accrediting bodies are doing the same activity at the request of VEE.

In order to offer such opportunities all over the world, supporting OIE in its goal to promote the implementation of Day-1 competencies among all its members, the development of adapted process should rely on all accrediting bodies internationally as the best way to create support. The IAWG together with the OIE *ad hoc* group on veterinary education are the two structures that could provide guidelines on dedicated process.

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