

State of play in development of national and regional accreditation bodies in Asia

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Accreditation of veterinary education establishments (VEEs) is a quality assurance process for students, faculty and administrators of VEEs, the veterinary profession, and the public. Recently, the OIE recommended Day 1 competencies for veterinarians working in national and global veterinary services. These competencies are being reviewed by accreditation bodies of member countries for potential incorporation into the evaluation standards for VEEs. According to the OIE list of VEEs in South, Southeast and East Asia, national accreditation systems for VEEs were identified in 10 of the 17 countries with VEEs, but not in the other 7 countries. In the 10 countries with systems in place, accreditation was conducted by veterinary statutory bodies, higher education accreditation bodies, or non-governmental accreditation bodies specialized for VEEs. The duration of accreditation validity awarded by these accrediting bodies ranged from 3 to 5 years. In addition, two VEEs in Southeast Asia have been accredited by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) University Network Quality Assurance System, a regional accreditation body for higher education institutions in the ASEAN countries. These national and regional accreditation bodies commonly evaluated three areas: operating principles; resources for and the quality of education, research and services; and outcomes assessment and its feedback. Over the past 15 years, the need for curriculum standardization and establishing a regional accreditation body for the VEEs have been repeatedly recognized in the annual meetings of the Asian Association of Veterinary Schools (AAVS). As a result, the AAVS recently prepared a draft standard curriculum for AAVS member schools and formed a new working group for curricular standardization and accreditation. Another drive for development of regional accreditation body for VEEs is the demand for a mutual recognition agreement that will facilitate mobility of veterinarians across the ASEAN countries. Some AAVS members are also preparing for evaluation by other well-established regional accreditation bodies, such as those in North America, Europe and Oceania. Taken together, it is anticipated that the continuous efforts over the past 15 years by the VEEs in Asia will eventually overcome large differences in educational resources and systems among the countries, and may lead to establishment of an accepted regional accreditation body for harmonization and quality assurance of veterinary medical education.

Keywords: national veterinary services, veterinary medical education, quality assurance, accreditation, ASEAN University Network Quality Assurance, Asian Association of Veterinary Schools