

**European Association
of Establishments for Veterinary Education**



RE-VISITATION REPORT

To the Veterinary Faculty of Lugo, University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain

On 27 – 29 April 2021

By the Re-visitation Team:

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Introduction

The Veterinary Faculty of Lugo (FVL) was evaluated by an ESEVT team in September 2018. In their report that was submitted to ECOVE, the team pointed to several areas in the veterinary teaching programme worthy of praise. However, insufficient clinical training in common animal species, especially in the equine and porcine species, and in porcine food safety and quality were identified as a Major Deficiency. In addition, the Visitation team identified several Minor Deficiencies.

On November 22, 2018, ECOVE made the following decision that was notified to FVL:

The Committee concluded that the following Major Deficiency was identified:

'The Establishment is not compliant with sub-standard 3.5 because of insufficient clinical training in common animal species, especially in equine and porcine, and in porcine food safety and quality. In accordance with the European System of Evaluation of Veterinary Training (ESEVT) and based on the educational requirements of the Directive 2005/36/EC as amended by Directive 2013/55/EU, the status of the 'Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Santiago de Compostela' is CONDITIONAL ACCREDITATION.'

A Re-visitation (RV) was planned for March 2020, but due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the RV had to be postponed. A new Re-visitation (RV) rescheduled to October 2020 had to be postponed for a second time to April 2021 for the same reasons. An updated RV Self-Evaluation Report including information about how FVL had dealt with the COVID-19 situation, dated February 12, 2021, was submitted to EAEVE in due time before the rescheduled Re-visitation.

The current ESEVT RV was performed according to the “Exceptional rules for ESEVT Visitations planned in 2021 considering the extraordinary circumstances linked to the COVID-19 pandemic” as approved by the EAEVE General Assembly on December 3, 2020. The option B was applied, with the Coordinator as onsite expert and the Chairperson as remote expert.

The RV-SER was sent on time to the visiting team and the RV was perfectly prepared and completed. A translator was present during all meetings since several teachers are not fluent in English. The onsite expert was impressed by the full implementation of the COVID-19-linked preventive measures in the FVL, both in facilities and procedures.

The SOP 2016 is valid for this RV.

1. Correction of the Major Deficiency

1.1. Major Deficiency: *Non-compliance with sub-standard 3.5 because of insufficient clinical training in common animal species, especially in equine and porcine, and in porcine food safety and quality.*

1.1.1. Findings

FVL has taken numerous actions to correct the Major Deficiency addressed in five separate points:

- Insufficient training in equine:

This has been approached by establishing measures for obtaining new animal resources and by modifications in different subjects in the teaching programme. This has resulted in new housing and examination facilities for horses at the VTH, new agreements with equestrian farms and ensuring an even supply of equine cadavers for autopsy, as well as new modules/practical sessions/lectures in different core subjects to increase clinical practice in horses.

- Insufficient training in porcine:

As for improved training in equine, FVL has established similar measures to increase training in porcine, aiming to both obtain new animal resources and to modify different subjects in the teaching programme. A new swine experimental teaching farm is under construction, and until the new farm can be taken into use, practicals are performed at breeding farms in Galicia according to new agreements.

- Insufficient clinical training in porcine food safety and quality:

A visit to the biggest porcine slaughterhouse in Galicia has been included as part of the Food Hygiene III subject. Forty students, divided into four groups of ten, are during a one-day visit together with a teacher and a staff member introduced to all the steps of the slaughtering process, from ante-mortem control to post-mortem inspections of viscera and carcasses. Additionally, students are examining an increased number of pig cadavers obtained from farms in the 3rd year of the study. The number of porcine necropsies was regarded as adequate during the first visit. After the implementation of these new measures, it is seen from the Indicators (chapter 3) that the number of hours of extramural practical training in FSQ and VPH is still low. To compensate for this, several aspects of FSQ and VPH are taught during on-farm practical trainings.

- Increase the duration (ECTS) of clinical rotations for all animals significantly

FVL emphasizes that the hospital rotations at the end of the curriculum should be considered as the culmination of a series of hospital clinical practices carried out throughout the entire curriculum. Nevertheless, the hospital rotations are increased, when fully implemented, from five to seven ECTS, giving one more week of rotation in the hospital and the consultation hours extended to the afternoons. As a result, students will participate in weekend shifts, have an extended schedule during afternoons and also increase their activities in the Clinical skills lab. Assessment of the student's clinical skills has been modified, among which are changes in the logbooks system and better integration of students in the clinical activities, ensuring their active participation in investigation and follow-up of patients.

- Finalize the new dairy farm and optimize its use to improve the teaching of Herd Health Management

The building of the new farm is completed, and the inauguration took place in December 2020. According to the updated report, all practicals will be organized in the new dairy farm from the second semester of the academic year 2020/21. Several modifications have been done in many relevant subjects to increase teaching activities and utilizing the new opportunities coming with the new farm.

1.1.2. Comments

Practical teaching activities done under COVID-19 restrictions have to a large degree (half of the hours of practicals) been replaced by digital teaching. When possible, teaching has been done in smaller groups of students, allowing for some hands-on training. For the spring semester 2021, FVL has been able to do all teaching on campus.

The correction of the Major Deficiency has been addressed by several approaches and measures, which has resulted in new buildings and facilities, modified curriculum including both theoretical and practical training, changes in the assessment of student's clinical skill as well as new collaboration with external partners.

1.1.3. Suggestions

None.

2. Correction of the Minor Deficiencies

2.1. Minor Deficiency 1: *Partial compliance with Substandard 2.5, because of insufficient autonomy of the Establishment for departmental restructuring and staff recruitment*

2.1.1. Findings

Public universities in Spain are governed by strict national regulations, which are mandatory. This affects the organization of the academic staff under the coordination of the departments and the recruitment of the support staff through the central organs of the universities. The suggestion from the ESEVT Visitation on greater autonomy of FVL on the departmental restructuring and the recruitment of staff, has been presented to the central organism of the University to raise awareness about the special needs of veterinary teaching.

2.1.2. Comments

None.

2.1.3. Suggestions

None.

2.2. Minor Deficiency 2: *Partial compliance with Substandard 3.5, because of insufficient training in functional sciences.*

2.2.1. Findings

Measures have been taken to improve the balance between anatomy, biochemistry and physiology subjects, resulting in more theoretical lectures in veterinary physiology and practical sessions in the VTH laboratory working with routine samples from hospital patients. The Clinical skill lab has been extended with an electrocardiography station.

2.2.2. Comments

None.

2.2.3. Suggestions

None.

2.3. Minor Deficiency 3: *Partial compliance with Substandard 4.7 because of insufficient housing and examination facilities for horses and pigs and the new farm not yet being built and fully functional*

2.3.1. Findings

New facilities have been built and taken into use. These are: 1) improved the housing, exploration and hospitalization facilities for horses in the VTH, 2) a new swine experimental teaching farm is under construction, and 3) the new dairy farm is completed and operational.

2.3.2. Comments

None.

2.3.3. Suggestions

None.

2.4. Minor Deficiency 4: *Partial compliance with Substandard 5.1, because of insufficient number of equine necropsies*

2.4.1. Findings

The equine service of the VTH has increased the number of agreements with the equestrian centres to increase the caseload of horses and raise the number of cadavers available for necropsies. Additionally, a new agreement with a company in charge of waste management of cadavers in Galicia is aimed at ensuring at least one equine carcass every week for each group of students.

2.4.2. Comments

Some practical challenges are met regarding the provision of equine cadavers from the waste management company. FVL is now able to get at least 12 cadavers per year through this agreement, aiming at a total number of 18.

2.4.3. Suggestions

None.

2.5. Minor Deficiency 5: *Partial compliance with Substandard 5.2, because of insufficient caseload of horses and pigs*

2.5.1. Findings

As general measures, the VTH has extended its consultation hours and has launched a new software for the digital management of clinical records (His-Vet). FVL has also invested resources from their own budget and gotten financial support from the Ministry of Education of the Autonomous Government of Galicia for major upgrading of the Clinical skills lab. Measures about how to increase equine and porcine clinical training are described under the Major Deficiency.

2.5.2. Comments

None.

2.5.3. Suggestions

None.

2.6. Minor Deficiency 6: *Partial compliance with Substandard 5.5, because of the structure of the clinical training not allowing the active participation of undergraduate students in the full investigation and follow-up of patients*

2.6.1. Findings

Several improvements are being gradually introduced to increase the active participation of undergraduate students in the full investigation and follow-up of patients during the hospital rotation. Some of the actions taken are already described under the Major Deficiency, as in addition, the VTH is increasing its teaching periods also including the summer months as teaching months and it is also increasing its daily opening hours.

2.6.2. Comments

None.

2.6.3. Suggestions

None.

2.7. Minor Deficiency 7: *Partial compliance with Substandard 7.8 because of the unexplained accumulation of students in the 5th year*

2.7.1. Findings

FVL explains how the observed accumulation of students in the fifth year was due to a bizarre way of calculating the students enrolled in the different terms of the curriculum, and for the objective pursued, certainly it was not correct.

Using an alternative estimator FVL shows that the distribution of students throughout the curriculum is more rational and corresponds to reality.

2.7.2. Comments

None.

2.7.3. Suggestions

None.

2.8. Minor Deficiency 8: *Partial compliance with Substandard 8.9 because of sub-optimal assessment of Day One Competences*

2.8.1. Findings

FVL reports that the internal discussions in the aftermath of the ESEVT visit revealed that objective and active methods for the assessment of clinical skills were already in use in several subjects. Nevertheless, several modifications have been adopted for a better assessment of Clinical Day One Competences. This includes modifications of the logbook system, evaluation by scoring system and OSCE applied for final evaluation of the students. Many of the teaching staff have attended workshops on “Rubrics as an instrument for formative evaluation in Higher Education”.

2.8.2. Comments

None.

2.8.3. Suggestions

None.

2.9. Minor Deficiency 9: *Partial compliance with Substandard 9.2 because of insufficient recruitment of junior staff and because of insufficient specialised academic staff in some key clinical disciplines*

2.9.1. Findings

The University of Santiago de Compostela (USC) has designed a Four-Year Strategic Plan for Academic Staff 2019-2022, approved by the USC Government Board in March 2019. This plan was built on the perception of an improved economic situation for Spain in general and aimed for a new staff recruitment policy for the USC, including FVL. New junior positions were assigned, contributing to closing the “generation gap”. However, this was before the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world, with its economic setbacks. Despite this unfortunate situation, FVL has been able to consolidate six new contracts for assistant professors as well as other positions that were entered before the pandemic.

2.9.2. Comments

None.

2.9.3. Suggestions

None.

2.10. Minor Deficiency 10: *Partial compliance with Substandard 10.4 because of the absence of residency programmes in most common clinical disciplines*

2.10.1. Findings

There are some legal issues that hinder the recruitment of residency candidates which are beyond FVL’s impact. The Spanish University System and the Spanish Veterinary College Organization do not officially recognize any degree from the European Veterinary Specialist Colleges awarded by the European Board of Veterinary Specialisation (EBVS). Therefore, the European Veterinary Diplomates lack academic or professional official validity in Spain, and for this reason it is not considered a relevant merit for the professional progression of the academic staff.

Despite this hindrance, FVL has ambitions to increase the number of diplomates and is planning corresponding residency programmes.

For the improvement of PhD programmes, it is important to note that at USC, the organization of these programmes does not depend on the faculties but they are coordinated through the International Centre for Advanced Doctorate Studies.

FVL emphasizes that they already host internationally recognized and highly competitive research groups with extensive international collaborations, from which their postgraduate students benefit.

2.10.2. Comments

It is interesting to note that a European residency programme for Specialization in Aquatic Animal Health is planned and will be coordinated by two ECAAH Diplomates in FVL.

2.10.3. Suggestions

None.

2.11. Minor Deficiency 11: *Partial compliance with Substandard 11.1 because of insufficient involvement of external stakeholders in Quality Assurance*

2.11.1. Findings

Following the recommendations of the ECOVE, the FVL created a stable External Advisory Committee, which, due to the COVID-19 related delays, was constituted in February 2021. This committee is a consultative body of FVL, and they will meet at least once a year.

2.11.2. Comments

None.

2.11.3. Suggestions

None.

3. ESEVT Indicators

3.1. Findings

An updated Excel table with recalculated relevant Indicators was presented and discussed at the re-visit. The update concerned the number of graduated students, which was almost double than in the SER of the FV in 2018 since the new curriculum is now fully implemented from 2014, which stabilises the number of incoming students (112-115) and graduates (media 109). The Indicator for the necropsies in horses, for which the FVL balance was slightly below the minimum ESEVT values, was explained to be due to the confinement of the FVL in the second semester of 2020. As mentioned in 2.4.2, FVL is aiming for a total of 18 equine cadavers for necropsy per year. For 2021, eight necropsies in horses were already done at the time of the Re-visitation. Regarding the low number of hours of extramural practical training in FSQ and VPH, this is commented upon in 1.1.1, and this compensation is regarded as satisfactory.

3.2. Comments

FVL has coped well with the COVID-19 situation. Although some practicals were cancelled due to confinement and closure of the faculty in the fall semester in 2020, students were to a large degree compensated with virtual exercises and online teaching.

3.3. Suggestions

None.

4. Conclusions

The Major Deficiency as well as most of the Minor Deficiencies identified after the full Visitation on 24 – 28 September 2018 have been fully corrected and an ongoing process is in place to correct the remaining Minor Deficiencies.

Decision of ECOVE

The Committee concluded that the Major Deficiency identified after the full Visitation on 24 – 28 September 2018 had been corrected.

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