

**European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education  
and the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe**

**European System of Evaluation of Veterinary Training**

**REPORT ON THE STAGE 2 VISITATION  
TO THE FACULTY OF VETERINARY MEDICINE  
OF UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI, FINLAND**

**October 19-22, 2009**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Helsinki, Finland, was visited on October 19-22, 2009 in the framework of the combined stage 1 and stage 2 evaluation process with a view to obtaining EAEVE accreditation.

A self-evaluation report (SER-2) had been prepared by the Faculty before the visit and this SER-2 together with the guidelines submitted by EAEVE and the findings and clarifications made or submitted during the visit formed the basis for this accreditation report. Thus, the SER 2 acted as primary source of information prior to the visitation. Only occasionally the SER-1 was consulted to provide information on a supplementary basis. The SER-2 and associated materials contained flow charts for each assessment procedure together with examples of documentation. Documentation was primarily in English and in cases where documentation was in Finnish, an English summary was available.

Full documentation of the assessment procedures was placed at the experts' disposal on day one of the visitation. The person responsible for quality assurance for each assessment procedure was available on call for the visiting experts. All communication was conducted in English.

Quality, quality control and quality assurance have been a major focus of the Faculty for many years. In 1995, the Faculty became part of the University of Helsinki and has been following the strategies and policies of the University ever since. The Faculty thus has a long tradition of and experience in developing, maintaining and executing quality control and quality assurance systems as well as in practical implementation of the strategies and policies dictated by the University. In the University Strategy 2007-2009, Quality Assurance was a highly prioritized focus area. This is e.g. exemplified by the University financing a position as quality manager.

In 2007, the university's quality assurance system was subjected to an audit by the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC) which it passed successfully.

In SER-2, p. 8-17, the present quality system is outlined. The quality system has a logical design with clear areas of responsibilities for designated persons and groups. The main objective is to secure that the student obtain generic academic skills. The basic model of quality control rests on the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) model developed by Deming. An important tool for quality assurance is the "Operations Manual of the University of Helsinki" that describes the activities the University engages in, and the associates activity procedures, evaluation, development and rules. Therefore, the Operations Manual is used to prepare a written description of goals and procedures, thus forming the basis for comparing what is wanted/described to what is actually delivered.

It was found that most, if not all procedures had been in operation for more than 2 years.

The handling of unexpected events is without doubt very good. One pedagogical teacher is assigned and helps the different commissions and the vice dean in problem solving matters. Students have the possibility to appeal and have their individual study book looked at.

The assessment by the expert visitors is that all 12 assessment points have been met satisfactorily and hence, it is the recommendation of the expert visitors that the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Helsinki, Finland is to be classified as holding the status of Accreditation

## **Chapter 1. POLICY STATEMENT**

The Faculty's policy statement is stated on page 8 in SER-2. It is outlined that: "*The quality of the University of Helsinki consists of the quality of the final results, the processes and activities that produce the results and the organisation quality, which includes the atmosphere at the University, the organisational culture and the outward image.*"

Further, the policy statement is referenced to [www.helsinki.fi/evaluation](http://www.helsinki.fi/evaluation) where it is described that:

*"Quality at the University of Helsinki means expedient activity and high-quality results. The cornerstones of the quality policy at the University of Helsinki are:*

- *through quality work the University of Helsinki reinforces its position as one of the best research universities in Europe*
- *each University community member, from teachers and researchers to other staff members and students, is responsible for the quality of the University in their activities*
- *the University quality assurance system supports the activity and development of activity of each member of the University community, their unit and the whole University community"*

In SER-1, page 14, 2.2 Comments, it is noted that: "*On 12 November 2008, in preparation for the new Universities Act, the Senate of the University of Helsinki set down policies on the University's structure and management system. In compliance with these, the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine has decided to close down its four departments on 1 January 2010 and replace them with divisions that are not administrative units, but educational and research organisations.*".

The overall teaching philosophy is that teaching and studies shall always be based on research. This implies that every teacher must be active in his/her own research and that each active research person must participate in teaching. Further, both

teaching and research are evaluated internationally on a regular basis. Research has been evaluated a number of times recently and the overall impression is that research is of high-quality. Both teaching and education have also been evaluated a number of times in the last decade. Research activity appears to be assessed annually by the Faculty by collection of data on scientific publications etc. published by each department (SER-2, p. 51).

Students are actively involved in quality assurance. An electronic system was developed in 2006 and is used for evaluation. Compulsory evaluations of whole-year and degree-level are mandatory. Single courses are not included in this survey but if problems are identified, round-table discussions with teachers and student representatives are held. Another measure is the OPPI questionnaire (Experiences of teaching and learning questionnaire). The veterinary student society meets with the dean on a monthly basis. Furthermore, students are represented in the Faculty Council, in Departmental steering groups and in all committees of the Faculty.

The Academic Planning Committee is instrumental in implementing, monitoring and revising the quality policy, e.g by annually updating the Operations Manuals. Internal audits of the Faculty's quality assurance system was established in November 2008 and an audit of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine concluded that processes and procedures are generally well described and understood but that a collection of systematic feedback from working life ought to be developed (i.e. outcomes assessment)

***Conclusion:***

The relationship between teaching and research was described in such a way that research education and research quality can be distinguished. The Faculty's strategy for quality and standards were described as were the organisation of the quality assurance system, the responsibilities of organisational units and individuals for the assurance of quality, the involvement of students in quality assurance, and the ways in which the policy is implemented, monitored and revised.

***Conclusion: Based on this, the expert visitors consider Assessment procedure 1 to be classified as Satisfactory***

## **Chapter 2. ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS, POST GRADUATE EDUCATION AND STUDENT WELFARE**

### **2.1 UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION**

Every applicant has to take part in an entrance examination. The entrance examination and the assessment criteria are the same for veterinary medicine and all medical faculties in Finland and it comprises questions in biology, chemistry and physics. The National Committee for Entrance Examinations in Medicine is responsible for the administrative processes and practical preparation of the entrance examination.

Half of the students are selected by the grades of this test, whereas the other half of the students are selected based on the grade of entrance test combined with the grade of the national matriculation examination. If an applicant has not sat for and passed a national matriculation examination, he/she must provide proof of at least a three-year professional degree. More than 90% of the applicants have, however, passed a national matriculation exam. The aim of the admission system is to choose the best and most motivated students with a satisfactory knowledge of biology and natural sciences. The entrance examination is open for foreign applicants, but the language of the examination is Finnish or Swedish. The main teaching language is Finnish. Therefore no foreign undergraduate students are enrolled at the moment.

An applicant can appeal the results of the entrance examination to the Admissions committee and the applicant can appeal the decision taken by the Faculty.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of students applying</b>	<b>Number of students admitted</b>		<b>Number of students appealing the assessment of their answers in the entrance examination</b>	<b>Successful complaints to the local administrative court</b>
		<b>Standard intake</b>	<b>Number of foreign students</b>		
2008	635	72	0	10	1
2007	550	58	0	12	0

The Admissions Committee prepares admission criteria, offers an opinion on the number of admitted students and is responsible for developing the admission of students to the degree programme in veterinary medicine in general. The admission criteria are annually validated in the Faculty Council.

The Faculty has a long history of co-operation in admission matters with other faculties of medicine in Finland. Co-operation on admissions matters is co-ordinated by the National University Admissions Committee of Medicine. The Development Committee of University Entrance Examinations in Medicine is in charge of the constant evaluation and development of the national entrance examination. This Committee includes a group of experienced professors and lecturers who are committed to the continuous development of the entrance examination. The entrance examination and the assessment criteria are the same for veterinary medicine and all medical faculties. The Faculty of Veterinary Medicine has strong representation in all these Committees.

Assessment of student performance (see also Annex III, Contents SER 1, chapter 5) is divided into

- Assessment of each course
- Assessment of the Bachelor's thesis and the Licentiate's thesis
- The Etappi checkpoint system ("do the students follow the study plan")

As far as coping with problems in the student assessment system is concerned, there are controls of the individual study plan, discussions with the vice-dean, the pedagogical teacher and the university psychologist.

Students are allowed as many retakes as they need. There is no upper limit as to the number of re-examinations. However, only very few students take advantage of more than 3 retakes. Grades are published in the intranet (not by names, but by their registration number).

It was found that enrolled students are assessed regularly using published criteria, regulations and procedures which are applied consistently. Student assessment procedures do measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and other programme objectives, e.g. day 1 competences, have clear and published criteria, do not rely on the judgements of single examiners are subject to administrative verification checks to ensure the accuracy of the procedures. Results of assessment are documented properly. Students are clearly informed about the assessment strategy being used for their programme, what examinations or other assessment methods they will have to undergo, what will be expected of them, as well as the criteria that will be applied to the assessment of their performance.

**Conclusion: Based on this, the expert visitors consider Assessment procedure 2 to be classified as Satisfactory**

## **2.2 POST-GRADUATE STUDENT EDUCATION; ACADEMIC TRACK**

Information on the following topics was presented:

- admission of national and foreign students
- underlying study programmes, requirements and programme-assessment
- student assessment procedures and results

The Faculty has two Ph.D.-programs, one in veterinary medicine and one in science. Both programs have been evaluated favourably recently. Whereas most are financed by external funding, merely a few are funded by the University (covering only the salary). Funding for experiments has to be obtained from external funding. The strategic goal concerning the number of Ph.D.-students at the Faculty is negotiated with the Ministry of education (approx. 11 per year). A total of 112 Ph.D.-students study at the faculty for the time being, the majority of which being veterinarians. Admission is primarily after advertisement and assessment of the applicants by the research groups. Mostly, selection among candidates is made on the basis of “fit to the team” instead of just looking at the grades. International Ph.D-students are also present.

Ph.D. is expected to take 4 years, which tends to be exceeded since the Ph.D.-students may also be engaged in part-time teaching or are on leave ( e.g. maternity leave), because some experiments take longer than originally planned, or some papers have not yet been accepted for publication (the rule is that 3 out of 4 have to be accepted for publication) After the Ph.D.-thesis has been submitted, the Committee scrutinizes it. If it is accepted, two external experts/scientists assess the thesis. Once it is accepted, it is subjected to public defence using a new external opponent.

## **2.3 POST-GRADUATE STUDENT EDUCATION; PROFESSIONAL TRACK**

At present, 18% of veterinarians are specialized.

Two systems are in place: A national specialization track and the Intern/residents track at the Faculty.

The national system: six areas of specialization (small animal medicine, equine medicine, production animal medicine environmental hygiene, food production hygiene, contagious animal diseases) as stipulated by the law.

The national specialization program takes 4 years (1 year general training in an appropriate position, followed by 3 years of supervised training. This can either be in private practice where a national specialist is present; except for contagious animal diseases. At least 6-12 months have to be spent at the Faculty which creates a bottleneck scenario as the number of positions at the Faculty is very limited.

However, a working group, among others consisting of representatives of the Ministry of Education has been established to look into this).

Admission: after having worked in an appropriate position for 1 year, a veterinarian can send an application to the faculty and is then assigned a supervisor. In principle, the national program is open to foreigners but they will be required to read and speak Finnish.

Most of the six areas cooperate with external institutions, e.g. [Finnish Food Safety Authority](#), EVIRA and other universities. The Faculty has an advisory board for veterinary specialization and an advisory board for continuing education.

Student assessment procedures and results: Assessment includes obligatory meetings, practical and academic portfolios, and a scientific article. The Faculty is the only body to accept the specialization examination. Approx. 10 veterinarians pass the specialisation test annually (total no. of veterinarians approx 1900).

Diplomates: In development, diplomates in several colleges are employed, as well as interns and residents at the Faculty. Diplomates are not automatically awarded the national specialization title; this is up to the national specialization committee.

It was found that postgraduate education is highly prioritized at the faculty. Appropriate rules and procedures exist for handling admission, process and assessment of the postgraduate education. Results of assessment are documented properly. Students are clearly informed about the assessment strategy being used for their programme, what examinations or other assessment methods they will be subject to, what will be expected of them, and the criteria that will be applied to the assessment of their performance.

**Conclusion: Based on this, the expert visitors consider Assessment procedure 3 to be classified as Satisfactory**

## **2.4 Student Welfare**

One general practitioner, nurses and a psychologist are dedicated to student welfare on Viikki Campus. Accidents are carefully recorded, and whereas smaller ones are treated at the campus, severe cases are sent to the hospital. Students are vaccinated appropriately. A psychologist is looking after students with personal problems (30-50 consultations/year). If problems with the study book occur, students receive help from the the students affairs officials, and senior lecturer in university pedagogy at the Faculty . In addition, counselling teachers may help students to solve suboptimal student-teacher interactions. Counselling teachers have a lot of contact with students who seem not to be afraid to ask for help. Teachers appear to care very much about the welfare of the students which is a very positive feature.

A mandatory course exists for students to introduce using computers and the basic programs. The intranet is easy to use.

Students housing exists, however, additional space would be desirable; students aids exists to cover financial problems.

Feedback can be performed anonymously.

**Conclusion: Based on the SER-2 and the discussions with relevant personnel of the faculty, the expert visitors consider Assessment procedure 4 as being classified as Satisfactory.**

### **Chapter 3. ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING STAFF**

The evaluation of teaching staff with regard to teaching and scientific merit takes place during recruitment and in annual personal review meetings. Students have the possibility to give feedback on an individual basis, since the faculty does not systematically collect feedback on individual teachers. However, the staff is evaluated indirectly by evaluating the quality of teaching (self evaluation using the teaching evaluation matrix system, feedback of students). Veterinary students give the award "teacher of the year" and faculty members received recently 3 awards at university level (p.35 SER2). Staff members are offered different possibilities for pedagogic training. Research is the focus at the faculty and every teacher is strongly encouraged to participate in research. Feedback is mandatory for students and students receive ECTS points for their effort. Therefore nearly 90% of students give feedback and receive feedback on their feedback by teachers.

The evaluation of teaching staff is performed in a decent way, awards are offered and students have the possibility for feedback. The only missing point is the peer control, which is only performed at recruitment time. However, in small faculties such internal peer reviews are only recommended during pedagogical classes and could otherwise be detrimental. A grading of individual teachers is not performed because of national regulations. The indirect evaluation allows identifying problems and excellence. Regular discussions at the Departmental level take place and prove helpful in identifying existing and potential problem areas. In individual discussions, the head of the Department tries to solve problems and encourages teachers to attend pedagogical classes offered by the faculty or the university.

**Conclusion: Based on the SER-2 and the discussions with relevant personnel from the faculty, the expert visitors consider Assessment procedure 5 as being classified as Satisfactory.**

## **Chapter 4. ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**

Learning opportunities are checked and research is performed in the faculty and published in international journals about medical education. The teaching evaluation matrix system is used to assess learning opportunities once a year. Mostly traditional lectures, practical exercises and eLearning is provided. The library increases the stock according to recommendations of teachers and the study guide every year.

The curriculum contains a substantial amount of self directed learning (about 1/3 of all education hours). Partially this time is controlled by teachers, partly it should be used by students as a learning opportunity preceding summative assessments.

In the self evaluation of the faculty it is mentioned that the curriculum is overloaded with teaching hours. Self directed learning hours should only be mentioned if formative assessment shows the learning results of the students. Such weak points were, however, already found using the implemented quality management system of the faculty showing that the system is healthy and measures for continuing improvement can be taken.

**Conclusion: Based on this, the SER-2 as well as the discussions with relevant personnel from the faculty, the expert visitors consider Assessment procedure 6 as being classified as Satisfactory.**

## **Chapter 5. ASSESSMENT OF TRAINING PROGRAMMES AND THE AWARD OF THE TITLE OF VETERINARY SURGEON**

Learning objectives, which were set by the Academic Planning Committee are presented in the study guide and on the learning management system. The curriculum is reviewed annually. An ECTS system is used. Students participate in committees and working groups of the faculty. The feedback system is highly appreciated.

National day-1-skills are discussed at the moment and should be introduced. Feedback from professionals resp. stakeholders are still required. In general response rates from stakeholders and graduates are low. The faculty has seen this problem.

National day-1-skills according to the suggestions of the EAEVE should be introduced. A closer interaction with stakeholders and graduates might be recommended.

**Conclusion: Even so, based on the SER-2 and the discussions with relevant personnel from the faculty, the expert visitors consider Assessment procedure 7 as being classified as Satisfactory.**

## **Chapter 6. ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE FOR CLINICS, LABORATORIES AND FARM**

Clinical service: At the Faculty approx. 22000 client contacts take place each year. The number of complaints is about 20-30 per year, mainly concerning money-issues. A procedure is in place to handle client complaints. Development of competencies of the teaching staff is regularly evaluated during the yearly employer development discussion with the boss.

Laboratories: In the Central Laboratory, quality control procedures are used throughout by means of internal and external quality control systems. The Central Laboratory checks the analyzers placed in the clinics on a regular basis.

Farms: for the compulsory four-week extra mural training, the farms are selected by the teacher but the student may also select a farm of their own choice as long as the number of animals is high enough and as long as the farm participates in the national surveys. The four-week extramural training is placed very early in the study program to secure that the students are exposed to handling and use of production animals.

Appropriate systems of quality assurance in the clinical area, the laboratories and the farms are in place and are working on a routine basis.

**Conclusion: Based on this, the expert visitors consider Assessment procedure 8 to be classified as Satisfactory**

## **Chapter 7. ASSESSMENT OF CONTINUING EDUCATION**

The faculty is actively involved in continuing education programmes in all different aspects of veterinary medicine. The courses are assessed by participants. The faculty is the only body to accept specialisation exams (national specialisation) and a certain period of time and theoretical training for the national specialisation program is performed at the faculty. The faculty is involved in the advisory board for continuing education together with external members.

The exact number of hours needed for continuing education by graduates is not clarified yet. It seems that the faculty provides a substantial amount of the necessary amount of CPD.

**Conclusion: Based on the SER-2 and the discussions with relevant personnel of the faculty, the expert visitors considers Assessment procedure 9 as being classified as Satisfactory.**

## **Chapter 8. ASSESSMENT OF RESEARCH**

The faculty emphasize that research based teaching and learning is one of their main objectives. Students are involved in research projects during their undergraduate studies (bachelors thesis and licentiate thesis). The faculty fosters PhD studies which are carefully and successfully monitored. Internal and external reviewers are securing the quality of research of PhD students. The faculty collects data on grant money, scientific publications and the number of doctoral theses completed each year. As bibliometric data impact factors are used. An international evaluation of research quality of the entire university of Helsinki is performed every six years.

The evaluation of research is healthy and well performed. Teachers are proud of performing research on a high scientific level. A comparison with other veterinary schools resp. using field adapted impact factors for comparison of the performance of the different Departments could be encouraged. Assessment of bachelors and licentiate thesis is performed using a well established scheme provided during the visit. Three main research themes are used and collaboration exists between the Departments.

Research cooperations throughout the faculty already exist. Cooperations between clinical and basic sciences could be encouraged and help in the recruitment phase of research oriented faculty staff also in a clinical setting.

**Conclusion: However, based on the SER-2 and the discussions with relevant personnel from the faculty, the expert visitors consider Assessment procedure 10 as being classified as Satisfactory.**

## **Chapter 9. ASSESSMENT OF INTERNATIONALISATION OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH**

A strategic plan was developed by the University of Helsinki to increase the internationalisation. No foreign students are enrolled in undergraduate studies because of the language barrier. However, more and more Finnish students study 1 year abroad. Classes and exams are recognized (ECTS). An active coordinator is helping students with the individual study book so that students will not have to prolong their study time. Some post graduate students from developing countries are studying at the faculty and these will be further developed. Post docs are performing research abroad. Funding for international conferences is possible. Teachers from abroad are appointed and are performing their teaching in English. In postgraduate

training foreign students are regularly involved. A guide for international researches and visitors is available. The organisation and help for foreign students and teachers is excellent. In addition, teachers from abroad are invited for a limited time for internal controls in teaching in the clinics. The ERASMUS program is enforced for students and teachers and several contracts with other faculties abroad exists.

**Conclusion: Based on the findings in the SER 2 and the useful discussion, the expert visitors consider that the Assessment procedure 11 on internationalisation is to be considered classified as Satisfactory inspite of the existing the language barrier.**

## **Chapter 10. ASSESSMENT OF COOPERATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS AND SOCIETY**

The number of veterinarians is relatively small in Finland, allowing nearly all veterinarians to know each other. This also helps in providing feed-back from employers and newly graduates, although this feedback has a more informal character at present. However, the Faculty is considering ways to make feed-back from employers and newly graduates more formal and systematic.

The Faculty has service-contracts with at least 6 Municipalities that includes the provision of veterinary care in the Municipality. Collaboration with the Finnish Veterinary Association is tight, as an example the plans for establishing an alumni association are currently being executed in a collaborative action between the faculty and the veterinary association.

The faculty also presents itself in a TV-program that is shown in national TV as a means to inform the general society.

The faculty regularly publishes up to date, objective and accurate information, both quantitative and qualitative, about the study programme. The information is readily accessible and not only used as a marketing opportunity. The faculty clearly sees areas of improving, e.g. the establishment of an alumni-association and the systematic feedback from employers and newly graduates. The faculty maintains communication with former students by several means, e.g. reports in the national veterinary journal, participation at exhibitions and conferences.

**Conclusion: Based on this, the expert visitors consider that the Assessment procedure 12 is to be classified as Satisfactory.**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Faculty has demonstrated a high degree of responsibility for and focus on quality which is monitored by means of a thorough quality assurance system. To achieve this objective, the faculty has implemented a particular control policy and associated procedures to ascertain that the quality standards of their programmes and awards are strictly adhered to. The Faculty is strongly committed to the development of a culture which recognises the importance of both quality and quality assurance. This is e.g. reflected in a clear strategy for quality and quality control as well as a strategy for continuous enhancement of quality. The strategy, policy and procedures - which stipulate the involvement of students and other stakeholders - all have a formal status and are publicly available.

**The expert visitors have come to the conclusion that all 12 assessment procedures listed in the guidelines are to be classified as “Satisfactory”.**

**This report was presented to the ECOVE on 23./24.November 2009. An unanimous decision was made to follow the experts' recommendations on both the stage I and II level and make the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine of the University of Helsinki the first one on the list of “Accredited Establishments”.**