

**European Association
of Establishments for Veterinary Education**



RE-VISITATION REPORT

**To the School of Veterinary Medicine, Faculty of Health Sciences of the Aristotle University
of Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki, Greece**

On 2 – 3 May 2022

By the Re-visitiation Team:

Ana María Bravo del Moral, Lugo, Spain: Chairperson

Pierre Lekeux, Liège, Belgium: ESEVT Coordinator

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Introduction

The School of Veterinary Medicine of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (called the Veterinary Education Establishment (VEE) in this Report) was evaluated by an ESEVT team in October 2021. In the report submitted by the team to ECOVE, several minor deficiencies were pointed out:

overall insufficient application of the relevant legislation on health, safety, biosecurity and EU animal welfare and care standards; insufficient hands-on training of students in farm animal clinics under the supervision of academic staff; insufficient number of qualified teaching and support staff in Clinical Sciences, especially in equines, to secure a group small enough to guarantee appropriate training of students, suboptimal financing; insufficient number and variety of cadavers for hands-on training in Pathology and of equines in Propaedeutics; lack of a record of the individual skills acquired by the student within a logbook in farm animal clinics; postgraduate students used for training undergraduates do not receive proper training in teaching and assessment methods; suboptimal SER, which contains a number of inconsistencies and inaccuracies.

On December 14, 2021, ECOVE made the following decision that was notified to the VEE:

The Committee concluded that the following Major Deficiencies had been identified:

1. Non-compliance with Substandard 4.6 because of overall insufficient application of the relevant legislation on health, safety, biosecurity and EU animal welfare and care standards.
2. Non-compliance with Substandard 5.2 because of insufficient hands-on training of students in farm animal clinics under the supervision of academic staff.
3. Non-compliance with Substandard 9.2 because the number of qualified teaching and support staff is insufficient in Clinical Sciences, especially in equines, to secure a group small enough to guarantee appropriate training of students.

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 VEE of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki is NON-ACCREDITATION.

A Re-visitation (RV) was planned for May 2022 and the RV Self-Evaluation Report (RSER), was submitted to EAEVE and the team in due time.

The current ESEVT RV was performed according to the “Exceptional rules for ESEVT Visitations planned in 2022 considering the extraordinary circumstances linked to the COVID-19 pandemic” as approved by the Executive Committee of EAEVE on 14 December 2021. The option A was applied, with all experts present in person.

The RSER was sent on time to the visiting team and the RV was developed in agreement to the proposed visitation programme, with great hospitality and care of the team.

The ESEVT SOP 2016 is valid for this RV.

1. Correction of the Major Deficiencies

1.1. Major Deficiency 1: Non-compliance with Substandard 4.6 because of overall insufficient application of the relevant legislation on health, safety, biosecurity and EU animal welfare and care standards.

The VEE has taken several actions to correct the Major Deficiency addressed in the following separate points:

- Non adequate storage and handling of hazardous chemical products in some laboratories.
- Non available or non-functional eye-washers, first-aid boxes, and fire extinguishers in some areas of the campuses and Kolchico Teaching Hospital (KTH).
- Lack of appropriate safety signalling (evacuation plan, EXIT signs, etc.).
- Housing of some faculty animals (two dogs and one cat used as blood donors) do not meet the minimum EU housing requirements and no record of their use in practicals.
- Lack of a changing room in necropsy room, non-appropriate clothing of staff and students to perform necropsies with protection against the physical and biological hazards, non-appropriate system of cleaning and disinfection of the rubber boots used in the necropsy.
- Lack of a changing room at KTH.
- Pharmacology, and Physiology use and sacrifice live animals for practicals whose learning outcomes can be achieved by other means, which is in contradiction with the 3Rs principle.

1.1.1. Findings

The correction of the Major Deficiency has been addressed by several approaches and measures, which had resulted in:

- Five emergency eye wash stations plus safety showers in laboratories where hazardous materials are used are now available.
- First aid boxes have been installed in all laboratories.
- Emergency devices are signalled and regularly inspected by the Civil Protection and Environmental Office of the University. Also, evacuation plans and EXIT signs are now posted in all buildings.
- Expired consumables used only for teaching purposes are now properly labelled and stored.
- The Anatomy unit is replacing formaldehyde fixed cadavers with alternative methods (saturated salt solution of sodium chloride perfused and fresh cadavers).
- Blood donors are no longer used since there is a new contract with an authorised animal Blood bank to supply the blood products for transfusion.
- Healthy companion animals for teaching propaedeutics are no longer housed in the Companion Animal Clinic. Instead, animals are now provided by Animal Charities with an official agreement. In compensation, these animals are clinically checked, spayed, and neutered for free.

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- The necropsy room has been rebuilt to have a separate entrance/exit for students, equipped with new changing rooms for female and male students, with 36 lockers in total, a large new table for necropsy of large animals, two separate sinks for necropsy tools and for handwashing, a set of rubber boots which do not leave the necropsy room and new devices for cleaning them. Disposable material (plastic coat, apron, sleeves, caps) is available for students and staff at the entrance of the changing rooms.
- Provisionally, the KTH has allocated the 2 on-duty rooms for students with toilets, which are now the changing rooms until these premises are built on the ground floor. First-aid boxes are now installed at the KTH.
- From the academic year 2022-23, students will follow two asynchronous e-learning seminars that are mandatory (and with assessment) at the 1st and 6th semesters, on General Guidelines for Biosafety SOPs, as prerequisite to start laboratory and clinical practicals.
- All students are now trained on animal welfare assessment in Animal husbandry during farm visits and in KTH dairy sheep farm.
- The units of Physiology and Pharmacology have replaced the use and sacrifice of laboratory animals by computer-assisted learning courses. The unit of Physiology will implement practicals of non-painful procedures (electrocardiograms, electromyography, blood pressure measurement, etc.) on dogs and cats owned by the staff and students in the small animal clinic, in collaboration with the clinicians.

1.1.2. Comments

- The new safety materials installed in the laboratories (eye washers, first aid boxes) are appropriate and located in the correct places.
- The new signalling of the buildings (fire extinguishers, evacuation plans, etc.), are clear and easy to see and follow.
- The new contract with the blood bank has proved to be more effective in the availability of blood for transfusion medicine and in surgical procedures.
- The use of dogs and cats from Animal Charities has already increased the number of clinical cases (traumatology, neutering, vaccinations, antiparasitic treatments, etc.) in the second semester of the academic year 2021-22 and will start in the next academic year with practicals in propaedeutics.
- The new facilities and equipment in necropsy room, including the dressing code, are adequate to protect against the physical and biological hazards, and promote bio-contention.
- The units of Physiology and Pharmacology are now strictly following the 3Rs principle.

1.1.3. Suggestions

None.

1.1.4. Decision

Major Deficiency 1 has been fully corrected.

1.2. Major Deficiency 2: Non-compliance with Substandard 5.2 because of insufficient hands-on training of students in farm animal clinics under the supervision of academic staff.

This Major Deficiency has the following separate points that the VEE has been working out:

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- Night and day emergency services are not available all days of the week nor all year round for farm animals
- A quite high 2nd opinion to 1st opinion cases ratio would result in insufficient hands of training of students in routine and simple cases.
- The number of animals used for preclinical training, especially horses is very low in comparison to the number of students.
- Lack of recording of individual *versus* population medicine cases, no record on the balance between acute and chronic cases, and/or consultations *versus* hospitalisation cases.
- Lack of recording of the number and the way farm animals are used.
- Lack of routine clinical examination and welfare assessment of VEE's animals.
- The size of the group for Anatomy, Pathology and practicals in farm animals at KTH are too large to guarantee hands-on-training of students; especially at KTH, it is common to merge students from 4th year and 5th year, being rare students' hands-on involvement in farm animals.

1.2.1. Findings

Several measures have been taken to correct the Major Deficiency:

- During spring semester of 2022, 4th and 5th year students are trained separately at KTH and 5th year student's size of the group has been reduced to 5-6 students per teacher and animal.
- The Companion Animal Clinic has hired 3 additional horses for training of students in propaedeutics which are housed in the VEE stables.
- Farm animal welfare assessment is now mandatory during practicals in Animal Production.
- A new electronic record system (i-vet) has been implemented and allows the recording of acute versus chronic cases, first versus second opinion cases, and outpatient versus hospitalised cases.

1.2.2. Comments

- Staff and students agree on the increase in the quality of teaching by reducing the size of the group and by separating students of different years.
- The availability of 4 healthy horses is now appropriate to train students in propaedeutics.
- The new electronic record system allows to retrieve data from farms, animals and students, which are available for statistical purposes and will become a complete portfolio to show students progression soon.
- The grading of the logbooks and the logbooks assessment is under discussion at the VEE and will be developed in the next academic year since the University law doesn't allow the change of the assessment methods in the middle of an academic year.
- Night and day emergency services are available all days of the week for farm animals, closing 1 month during summer, and one week during Christmas and Easter holidays.

1.2.3. Suggestions

None.

1.2.4. Decision

Major Deficiency has been fully corrected.

1.3. Major Deficiency 3: Non-compliance with Substandard 9.2 because the number of qualified teaching and support staff is insufficient in Clinical Sciences, especially in equines, to secure a group small enough to guarantee appropriate training of students.

This Major Deficiency is based in several points as follows:

- Several clinical sectors have very few qualified veterinarians to train students, being an example the equine service that has only one fully qualified veterinarian.
- Support staff for the clinic is scarce and veterinarian nurses, or equivalent, are absent.
- There is a clear imbalance in the workload of teachers in clinical sciences per student in comparison to the ones in basic sciences, animal production and/or food safety areas.
- Research staff (mainly postgraduate students) is very much involved in part-time teaching with no legal bond with, or paid by the university.

1.3.1. Findings

The VEE has implemented the following actions to overcome this Major Deficiency:

- A new academic position (assistant professor) in Equine Medicine and Surgery has been created to start in the academic year 2022-23. In the meantime, an equine clinician has been contracted by the Companion Animal Clinic (starting on 1st March 2022) to share the running of the ambulatory clinics and emergency service.
- 9 new temporary posts (one semester contract but renewable) have been opened for clinical teaching: 1 post-doc and 8 PhD students. Another 7 post-doc and 8 PhD students will be opened for clinical and preclinical services.
- At least 4 new faculty positions (assistant professors) are forthcoming in the Department of Clinical Sciences in addition to the one in Equine Medicine and Surgery.
- Selection criteria of PhD students involved in teaching are based on their merits and marks and they receive one-month training by the academic staff to improve their teaching competency.

1.3.2. Comments

- The new assistant professor in Equine Medicine and Surgery will start in September and, if possible, the service will also keep the contract with the current equine clinician for the future. These changes mean a substantial improvement in the running of the equine clinical services.
- The running of the clinical services has been improved with the new 8 contracts of post-doc and PhD students and will increase the staff with the new assistant professor calls.

1.3.3. Suggestions

None.

1.3.4. Decision

Major Deficiency 3 has been fully corrected.

2. Correction of the Minor Deficiencies

2.1. Minor Deficiency 1: Partial compliance with Substandard 2.1 because of suboptimal financing

The total funding of the VEE is considered insufficient to hire support staff, to perform research and to replace and update the equipment.

2.1.1. Findings

After a request from the VEE, its funding has been increased by the University (29% increase). The VEE is pursuing additional funding through the increase in clinical caseload, the expanding of diagnostic services offered and the contract between Companion Animal Clinic and Pet Food Industries.

2.1.2. Comments

- The VEE will receive extra 14,000€ from renting of the land of the University that will return to the VEE; the investment for rebuilding the necropsy room, buying safety signalling and devices (eyes washers, etc) is also an extraordinary income.
- The VEE has already increased the second opinion cases and the number of patients, expanding the service of the CT scan to all weekdays (that opened only 2 days) and has increased the laparoscopies.
- The VEE has 5 contracts with Pet Food Industries, that use corridors in the clinics for advertising, and all together they pay 10,000€; these industries also fund speakers for 2 seminars a year and pay for books and materials for the students.
- Ultrasound training courses for practitioners will also increase the budget. Rent of experimental laboratories for medical surgeons and veterinary associations are another source of money.

2.1.3. Suggestions

The VEE is encouraged to follow all the initiatives to increase the budget.

2.2. Minor Deficiency 2: Partial compliance with Substandard 3.1 because of the inaccurate data addressed in Table 3.1.2 of the SER regarding the hours of training in all groups of subjects addressed on p.20 of the SOP 2016 and listed in the Annex V.4.1 of the Directive 36/2005/EC to demonstrate compliance with the EU Directive

An updated version of the SER was done in November 2021, and a refined last SER dated on December 2021, has been sent to the team in due time, with tracking of the changes done in the document.

2.2.1. Findings

The VEE has updated the SER by correcting the inaccuracies in Table 3.1.2.

2.2.2. Comments

Table 3.1.2 of the SER is now accurate.

2.2.3. Suggestions

None.

2.3. Minor Deficiency 3: Partial compliance with Substandard 5.1 because of insufficient number and variety of cadavers for hands-on training in Pathology and of equines in Propaedeutics

2.3.1. Findings

Some practical challenges are met regarding the outcome of this Minor Deficiency:

- 3 additional horses for practicals in Propaedeutics are stabled at the VEE during the practical trainings.
- The VEE is discussing with the governmental veterinary authorities on the best approach to increase the number of farm animal's cadavers from commercial farms.
- The VEE is discussing with private contractor companies that collect cadavers from farms to provide the required numbers for training students.

2.3.2. Comments

The VEE has a new vehicle for transportation of cadavers that is pending of adaptation to the regulations in a few days and of auditing by the Prefecture. This is a vehicle appropriate for the transportation of small and mid-sized cadavers, but too small for large cattle and horses. To solve this, the official veterinarians are promoting the donation of cadavers, and the prefecture of central Macedonia region is going to modify the contract with the company in charge of the waste of cadavers to allow its use by pathology while meeting the law.

2.3.3. Suggestions

None.

2.4. Minor Deficiency 4: Partial compliance with Substandard 8.9 because of the lack of a record of the individual skills acquired by the student within a logbook in farm animal clinics.

2.4.1. Findings

A new logbook has been created to record the clinical cases and procedures performed by students, individually, on farm animals, starting its distribution in February 2022 to students in the 8th and 10th semesters. Its full implementation, which is supervised by the teaching staff, is a prerequisite to be allowed to sit the final practical exams at the end of the 10th semester.

2.4.2. Comments

The new logbook for farm animals is in place from the second semester of the academic year 2021-22 allowing the individual assessment in the acquisition of competences by the students.

2.4.3. Suggestions

None.

2.5. Minor Deficiency 5: Partial compliance with Substandard 9.3 because postgraduate students used for training undergraduates do not receive proper training in teaching and assessment methods and they receive nil or small payment for delivering clinical (and other) teaching activities.

This minor deficiency is based on the fact that postgraduate students are not obliged to follow continuous education courses on teaching methodologies and assessment of students before they start to teach undergraduates.

2.5.1. Findings

- New innovative training programmes have been established by the University (“training the trainers”) as continuous education for teaching staff.
- PhD contracted students must follow a one-month training activity by the existing staff prior to their involvement in teaching. This training activity focuses on optimal clinical and hospitalisation practices, client management, biosafety principles, collaboration with national or international laboratories.
- Some new post-graduate students are contracted now (see Major Deficiency 9.2).
- Other post-graduate students are paid sporadically when training undergraduates and receive tuition-free postgraduate clinical training.

2.5.2. Comments

The training course “training the trainers” will start next September and, during the summer period, the Teaching and Learning Support Office at the University will collect the needs of the VEE and design ad hoc courses that will be mandatory for the new academic staff.

2.5.3. Suggestions

None.

2.6. Minor Deficiency 6: Partial compliance with Substandard 11.8 because of the suboptimal SER, which contains several inconsistencies and inaccuracies, and requires a substantial revision, since this document will be publicly available.

2.6.1. Findings

The VEE has updated the SER by correcting the inaccuracies detected during the full Visitation:

- Lack of a precise organisational structure of the VEE and its committees, as well as its roles and members.
- Lack of inclusion of the salaries and expenses in utilities paid by the university in table 2.1.1.
- Lack of the foreseen expected expenditures and revenues.
- Inaccurate data in table 3.1.2 and in the calculation of the total amount of hours of training per student (see Minor Deficiency 3.1).
- Inaccuracies on the variety of species and farms used for training in Animal Production.

2.6.2. Comments

The VEE has corrected all parts of the SER and RSER and now the data provided in these documents are accurate.

2.6.3. Suggestions

None.

3. ESEVT Indicators

3.1. Findings

The Indicators are above the minimal values, except for the number of equine necropsies, which is slightly below the minimal value.

3.2. Comments

A strategy is in place to increase the number of equine necropsies.
(See also Minor Deficiency 5.1).

3.3. Suggestions

None.

4. Conclusions

The three Major Deficiencies have been fully corrected.

Three Minor Deficiencies have been corrected (Substandards 3.1, 8.9 and 11.8) and an ongoing process is in place for correcting the remaining ones (Substandards 2.1, 5.1 and 9.3).

Decision of ECOVE

The Committee concluded that the Major Deficiencies identified after the full Visitation on 11 – 15 October 2021 had been corrected.

The Veterinary Education Establishment (VEE) of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki is therefore classified as holding the status of: **ACCREDITATION**.