



PRELIMINARY VISITATION REPORT

To the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje, North Macedonia

On 5 - 8 November 2024

By the Preliminary Visitation Team:

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Introduction

Veterinary education in Skopje was established in 1991 as a Veterinary Department of the Faculty of Agriculture of the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje (UKIM).

The Faculty of Agriculture, the Veterinary Institute, and the state Main Veterinary Hospital provided facilities, equipment, as well as most of the teaching and collaborative staff, with certain courses also utilising academic staff from the Faculty of Medicine.

In 1994, the Veterinary Department became a separate Veterinary Faculty, and in 2000 changed its name to Faculty of Veterinary Medicine - Skopje (called the VEE in this report).

In 2022, an additional study programme in English was initiated.

Recently, two additional state VEEs were created, despite the low Macedonian population (1.8 million inhabitants) and the low number of students in the Skopje VEE (around 25/class)

A Consultative Visitation was completed by EAEVE in 2016. Despite insufficient public funding, several improvements have been completed recently.

1. Objectives, Organisation and Quality Assurance Policy

1.1. Findings

The VEE has a clear mission of providing high-level undergraduate, postgraduate, doctoral and continuing education programs together with services in the area of veterinary medicine. Teaching, research and services are the strong points of its objectives. It is part of the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje. Its official authority is the Ministry of Education and Science (MES). The

university consists of 23 faculties and 5 research institutes, it is led by the Rector, elected by the complete academic staff. The governing body of the VEE is the Teaching-Scientific Board (TSB) including all assistants, associate and full professors and 4 students (37 heads). TSB elects the Dean and Vice Deans. Teaching, research and services are carried out in 22 departments, the University Veterinary Hospital (UVH) and the National Veterinary and Food Institute (NVFI). The work of the VEE is supported by 12 committees and the Quality Control Body (QCB). The VEE founded a company (EDUVET-DOOEL) to facilitate connections between FVMS and society. The VEE has a Strategic Plan for 2018-2023; the new one is under preparation. The written basis of the quality assurance of the VEE is the Quality Assurance Policy and the Rulebook of the Quality Assurance System. The Board for Cooperation and Trust with the Public serves to channel the influence of the stakeholders.

1.2. Analysis of the findings/Comments

The structure of the VEE is similar to that of other establishments, and the work is supported by different committees. The VEE has documents of Quality Assurance, but the presence of a working quality management system is not evident.

1.3. Suggestions

The influence of the stakeholders must be increased. Implementation of QA loops in all 10 areas is recommended.

2. Finances

2.1. Findings

The VEE is a state-subsidised faculty. A part of its revenue comes from public authorities (21-40%), and the rest is raised by the VEE. Tuition fees, services and research grants are the source of its own revenue. The state subsidy and the own income are handled on separate accounts. The expenditure exceeded the revenues in the recent two years, and it was covered by the reserve of the VEE. The reserve of the VEE is around its actual yearly revenue. The financial plan of the university must be adopted by the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) and the Ministry of Finance (MF). The VEE has only partial financial autonomy; the MES and the MF can shorten the financial plan of the VEE even if it has available funds on the self-financing account.

2.2. Analysis of the findings/Comments

The governmental budget covers the salaries of the employees, the expenditure on utility services and some part of the investment in equipment. All other costs are paid from the own income of the VEE. Despite the limited resources, the VEE bought several equipment and made renovation projects. The financial plan is very rigid; the VEE cannot make expenditures above its planned figures; for this reason, a great reserve has been accumulated. The proportion of research grants in the income is very low, below 1%.

2.3. Suggestions

Centralisation of the available sources for veterinary training and raising public support for education and research is recommended. More financial autonomy should be given to the VEE. The weight of income from research grants should be increased.

3. Curriculum

3.1. General Curriculum

3.1.1. Findings

The VEE has an Integrated Undergraduate and Graduate Study programme based on the EU Directives and the standards of the EAEVE, aiming to achieve the Day One Competences (D1C). The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) has been implemented. The curriculum is regularly revised by the Vice Dean for Education and the Commission for Re-accreditation of the Study Program. The course consists of 7,527.5 hours without electives. Lectures amount to 24%, supervised self-learning 38%, laboratory and desk-based work 13.9%, non-clinical animal work 8.9% and clinical animal work 15.1% of the total curriculum hours. The programme is evaluated and revised every five years. It consists of 11 semesters; however, from 2023/2024 a 12-semester-long curriculum was introduced. Teaching is in two languages, Macedonian and since 2022 English. The two programs are identical with one exception: the clinical practice of students of the English class will always be extramural. In addition to the compulsory subjects 59 elective courses are offered, and students must choose 11-15 elective courses, resulting in 10-30% of the total credits. Writing diploma work is compulsory. There is no data in the SER on the connection between the different subjects and D1C.

3.1.2. Analysis of the findings/Comments

The curriculum meets the general requirements of the relevant EU Directives and the SOP of the ESEVT.

3.1.3. Suggestions

Analysis of the provision of D1C in the programme would be beneficial.

3.2. Specific curriculum

3.2.1. Findings

Basic sciences

Basic subjects and basic sciences are taught in the first four semesters with a strong emphasis on practical teaching through laboratory exercises. All basic subjects and sciences listed in the EU Directive are in the curriculum, and the number of teaching hours is appropriate.

Clinical Sciences in companion animals (including equine and exotic pets)

Clinical training of the students begins in the 6th semester with the subject “Clinical and laboratory diagnostics for companion animals, equines” focusing on basic clinical examination and laboratory diagnostic methods. The use of models has been helping clinical training since 2021. Theoretical and practical clinical training is continued in the 7th and 8th semesters in the framework of different clinical subjects. Clinical rotations are organised from the 6th to the 11th semester. Hands-on clinical training in horses is limited. The clinical work of the students is recorded in a logbook.

Clinical Sciences in food-producing animals (including Animal Production)
Clinical training in food-producing animals begins in parallel with companion animals and horses. Clinical practice in the case of food-producing animals is carried out in extramural practice. The clinical work of the students in food-producing animals is also recorded in the logbook.

Veterinary Public Health (including Food Safety and Quality)
A total of 165 lectures and 90 laboratory practicals are devoted to teaching subjects of Veterinary Public Health, and it is completed by 135 hours of extramural practicals in slaughterhouses, dairy plants and food processing enterprises.

Professional knowledge (including soft skills, e.g. communication, teamwork skills, management skills)
Teaching soft skills begins in the 4th semester with the subject of Communication in Veterinary Practice and is continued by workshops at the Veterinary Teaching Hospital (VTH).

3.2.2. Analysis of the findings/Comments

Basic sciences

Teaching basic subjects and basic sciences meets the European requirements.

Clinical Sciences in companion animals (including equine and exotic pets)
The structure of teaching clinical sciences in companion animals meets European standards but the current patient caseload doesn't allow the acquisition of D1C in the equine species.

Clinical Sciences in food-producing animals (including Animal Production and Herd Health Management)
The structure of teaching clinical sciences in food-producing animals is correct but the current patient caseload and herd visits don't allow the acquisition of D1C in individual medicine and herd health management.

Veterinary Public Health (including Food Safety and Quality)
All relevant subjects of VPH are taught at the VEE.

Professional knowledge (including soft skills, e.g. communication, teamwork skills, and management skills)
A minimal training in Management and Communication Skills in Veterinary Medicine is included in the study programme.

3.2.3. Suggestions

The introduction of additional soft skills subjects into the curriculum is suggested.

3.3. Elective Practical training

3.3.1. Findings

Elective Practical Training can be done in intra- or extramural form during the summer periods; it is a precondition of enrollment into the next year. The VEE has contracts with 49 EPT providers including veterinary clinics, practitioners and farms.

3.3.2. Analysis of the findings/Comments

EPT is in agreement with the Standards.

3.3.3. Suggestions

None.

4. Facilities and equipment

4.1. Findings

The campus of the FVMS is located at the edge of Skopje. The buildings are 60-70 years old. The Administration building was reconstructed six years ago, and some other buildings were also renovated following the Strategic Plan 2018-2023, however, several buildings also need extended improvement. A part of the own income of the VEE was spent on laboratory, clinical and other equipment. The lecture halls are appropriately installed, and the laboratories are well-equipped. The Clinical Skills Room was opened in 2021. The VEE has 12 accredited laboratories, which also serve as national official and reference laboratories. The VTH can receive only companion animals, hospitalisation is available only for 8 small dogs or cats. The isolation facility is missing, but there is a separate room for the examination of animals with infectious diseases. The necropsy room is not suitable for dissection of large animals. The VTH is working during business hours. Written medical records are used. The VEE has no ambulatory clinic, only 2 vans each with 9 seats. The Biosafety Manual of the VEE is just being prepared, the overall biosafety measures have not been implemented. Most signs are only in Macedonian; however, there are English classes at the VEE. Expired medicines can be found in the VTH. There is a privately owned veterinary clinic on the campus that is completely independent and not involved in the work of the VEE.

4.2. Analysis of the findings/Comments

There is no clinic for farm animals and horses, and the capacity for hospitalisation of dogs and cats is low. No large animals can be examined in the necropsy room. There is no 24/7 service at the VEE.

4.3. Suggestions

A comprehensive Biosecurity Manual is needed for the VEE. Definition, teaching, posting and implementation of biosecurity procedures are recommended (soap, disinfectant, towel must be

everywhere, signposts, disinfection mats etc.). Regular training of students and staff on biosecurity is recommended. Signs must also be written in English. Good Pharmacy Practices must be introduced.

5. Animal resources and teaching material of animal origin

5.1. Findings

Non-clinical training includes practical training where students can work with healthy animals (available intramurally and extramurally), animal products, animal cadavers and animal models. Clinical training includes working with patients in the VTH or extramural herds while using appropriate diagnostic procedures.

Practical trainings are also organised for Avian Diseases and Biology and Pathology of Bees, Game and Fish.

The VTH is open from Monday to Friday, 08:00-16:00 but does not provide after-hours service or 24-hour shifts. Patients are either first opinion or referral cases.

The numbers of healthy animals, patients and cadavers used for teaching are listed in Table 5 and the Indicators file.

Slaughterhouses for ruminants, pigs and poultry are also visited by students.

Nursing care skills are provided to students by different courses/practicals.

Paper-based medical records are completed for all VTH patients and are available for students. An electronic recording system is under development but has not implemented yet.

5.2. Analysis of the findings/Comments

There are few healthy animals available for pre-clinical training.

The number of patients and cadavers available for clinical training is very low, especially in equine and food-producing animals, which is a concern for the acquisition of D1C in all species and disciplines by all undergraduate students.

5.3. Suggestions

It is suggested to develop a strategy to enhance the availability of healthy animals for pre-clinical training and the caseload of patients and cadavers for clinical training.

6. Learning resources

6.1. Findings

Students utilise textbooks available in Macedonian, Serbian, Croatian, or English. Additionally, some teachers offer textual resources in digital as well as print formats.

The VEE has its own library (3600 copies of national and foreign literature in the field of veterinary medicine, as well as related disciplines such as zoology, biochemistry, and environmental sciences, and 10 titles of foreign periodicals). Students can also utilise the National and University Library St.

Clement of Ohrid, as well as the University's e-library (18,000 journals available in full text and 30,000 indexed journals).

The Head of the library is a certified librarian. The library operates from Monday to Friday, with opening hours from 8.00 to 16.00. The reading capacity of the facility is 23 seats. The library's reading room is equipped with 11 personal computers that provide internet access to staff and students.

There is currently no IT manager and no connection with Eduroam.

An e-platform is being developed in collaboration with the VEEs in Belgrade and Zagreb in the context of an Erasmus+ project entitled "Digital Education in Veterinary Studies".

17 animal models are currently available in the skill lab.

6.2. Analysis of the findings/Comments

Learning resources are available for staff and students, although there is little support for the development of e-learning and the acquisition of digital skills.

6.3. Suggestions

It is suggested to make extended WiFi and Eduroam, e-learning platform and IT support available for staff, students and visitors.

It is also suggested to enhance the documentation available in English for international students and the training in digital tools.

7. Student admission, progression and welfare

7.1. Findings

A total of 50 students can be admitted each year, 35 of them are state-financed and 15 are full-fee students. The limit of standard students was generally maximally used, however, only 21 students were admitted in the recent year, and the quota of the VEE was not filled. The number of admitted full-fee students is much below the limit. There is no entrance examination for the applicants. About a third of the first-year students graduate, the average length of the study is more than 8 years. The length of the study was limited just recently to 11 years. The progression criteria are published. The Student Service Office helps students with different issues, however, learning support, counselling, career advice, and support for ill or disabled students are provided only on a teacher-to-student basis. The Student Assembly elects students to the different bodies of the VEE and a Student Ombudsman Deputy conveys the needs of students to the management.

7.2. Analysis of the findings/Comments

The number of admitted students, together with the admission criteria, are published by the VEE. The number of admitted students is proportional to the available resources. The attrition rate is very high.

7.3. Suggestions

A strategy should be created to increase the number of applicants, and an official system for student support should be implemented.

8. Student assessment

8.1. Findings

The different forms of student assessment are regulated by laws and university decisions. Each teacher is autonomous in defining the form of the evaluation. Preclinical subjects generally use written exams, while clinical courses prefer oral and/or practical exams and continuous evaluation. Examinations may be taken up to three times, however, after the third time, students can ask for a committee exam. The assessment system is evaluated by the Self-evaluation Committee of the VEE at least once within 3 years. The use of a logbook was introduced in the recent academic year.

8.2. Analysis of the findings/Comments

The connection between student assessment and D1C is not evident.

8.3. Suggestions

Teachers should be regularly trained to apply modern assessment methods.

9. Teaching and support staff

9.1. Findings

The number of FTE teaching, support and research staff are around 40, 27 and 7 respectively. 84% of the teaching staff are veterinarians. Undergraduates or PhD students can be elected as demonstrators.

Additional positions require a decision from the Ministries of Education and Finances.

Currently, there are 10 veterinarians and 1 support staff in the VTH, which doesn't allow a sufficient patient caseload for hands-on training of all students and 24/7 clinical services for training in emergency cases.

Selection for teaching, scientific, and collaborative positions, as well as demonstrators, follows the University Rules.

There is no formal training to teach and to assess for the teaching staff.

The VEE continuously encourages the academic staff to improve their professional and teaching skills, through participation in various educational workshops and international conferences.

The student surveys for assessment of the quality of the teaching process and academic staff are mandatory and are an integral part of the self-evaluation reports, which are published on the VEE website.

9.2. Analysis of the findings/Comments

Due to the low number of students, the staff-to-student ratio is high and allows small-group teaching

and one-to-one discussions.

The current staff is highly motivated for education and research, despite the insufficient public funding, the absence of formal training to teach and to assess and the difficulties in obtaining additional positions strongly requested in clinical disciplines.

The good English proficiency of the staff and the international experience of the academic staff are commendable.

Legal procedures for employing new staff are complex and the VEE has little autonomy on it.

9.3. Suggestions

It is suggested to develop formal training to teach and assess for teaching staff, to encourage continuous education for teaching and support staff, to fight for the relevant ministries to fund additional positions in clinical disciplines for teaching and support staff and to provide additional autonomy to the VEE.

10. Research programmes, continuing and postgraduate education

10.1. Findings

Undergraduate students engage in lectures that are predominantly based on research and evidence-based medicine across most subjects.

Students have the option to engage in essay writing and/or project tasks.

Workshops on conducting scientific research and writing scientific papers are periodically organised. Undergraduate students are encouraged to engage in research and develop their scientific skills through participation in the international scientific meeting "Days of Veterinary Medicine," organised by the VEE every two years.

All students are required to complete a graduation thesis.

Third Cycle PhD Programmes at FVMS are organised within the Doctoral School at "St. Cyril and Methodius" University in Skopje. Currently, the VEE offers two accredited doctoral programmes: Veterinary Medicine and Food Safety.

The VEE offers a second-cycle (specialisation) programme in Professional Studies in Food Safety and Quality.

The VEE also offers ongoing training and courses for veterinary practitioners, official veterinarians, and other relevant stakeholders.

The VEE maintains both informal and formal relationships with the veterinary profession, the Food & Veterinary Agency, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Local Government.

There is no formal QA loop for the evaluation of research-based teaching.

10.2. Analysis of the findings/Comments

Despite the insufficient public funding for research, the VEE provides a research-based education, which allows students to be familiarised with scientific research and evidence-based medicine and to participate in research projects.

Thanks to external funding, some laboratories are very well-equipped, which allows them to perform research activities, diagnostic services and contract research.

10.3. Suggestions

It is suggested to continue to fight for enhancing research activities via national and international grants.

ESEVT Indicators



ESEVT Indicators

Name of the VEE:					
Date of the form filling:					
Calculated Indicators from raw data		VEE values	Median values ¹	Minimal values ²	Balance ³
I1	nº of FTE teaching staff involved in veterinary training / nº of undergraduate students	0,387	0,15	0,13	0,261
I2	nº of FTE veterinarians involved in veterinary training / nº of students graduating annually	2,844	0,84	0,63	2,214
I3	nº of FTE support staff involved in veterinary training / nº of students graduating annually	2,563	0,88	0,54	2,023
I4	nº of hours of practical (non-clinical) training	710,000	953,50	700,59	9,410
I5	nº of hours of Core Clinical Training (CCT)	960,000	941,58	704,80	255,2
I6	nº of hours of VPH (including FSQ) training	255,000	293,50	191,80	63,20
I7	nº of hours of extra-mural practical training in VPH (including FSQ)	150,000	75,00	31,80	118,2
I8	nº of companion animal patients seen intra-murally and extra-murally / nº of students graduating annually	44,063	67,37	44,01	0,053
I9	nº of individual ruminants and pig patients seen intra-murally and extra-murally / nº of students graduating annually	33,438	18,75	9,74	23,70
I10	nº of equine patients seen intra-murally and extra-murally / nº of students graduating annually	0,219	5,96	2,15	-1,931
I11	nº of rabbit, rodent, bird and exotic seen intra-murally and extra-murally/ nº of students graduating annually	9,281	3,11	1,16	8,121
I12	nº of visits to ruminant and pig herds / nº of students graduating annually	2,469	1,29	0,54	1,929
I13	nº of visits of poultry and farmed rabbit units / nº of students graduating annually	0,500	0,11	0,04	0,455
I14	nº of companion animal necropsies / nº of students graduating annually	1,063	2,11	1,40	-0,338
I15	nº of ruminant and pig necropsies / nº of students graduating annually	0,406	1,36	0,90	-0,494
I16	nº of equine necropsies / nº of students graduating annually	0,000	0,18	0,10	-0,100
I17	nº of rabbit, rodent, bird and exotic pet necropsies / nº of students graduating annually	0,125	2,65	0,88	-0,755
I18	nº of FTE specialised veterinarians involved in veterinary training / nº of students graduating annually	0,094	0,27	0,06	0,034
I19	nº of PhD graduating annually / nº of students graduating annually	0,156	0,15	0,07	0,086



ESEVT Indicators

Name of the VEE:		FVMS				
Name & mail of the VEE's Head:		Dean Jankuloski				
Date of the form filling:						
Raw data from the last 3 complete academic years			2023/2024	2022/2023	2022/2021	Mean
1	nº of FTE teaching staff involved in veterinary training		37	37	35	36,33
2	nº of undergraduate students		105	96	81	94,00
3	nº of FTE veterinarians involved in veterinary training		31	31	29	30,33
4	nº of students graduating annually		10	15	7	10,67
5	nº of FTE support staff involved in veterinary training		28	28	26	27,33
6	nº of hours of practical (non-clinical) training		710	710	710	710
7	nº of hours of Core Clinical Training (CCT)		960	960	960	960
8	nº of hours of VPH (including FSQ) training		255	255	255	255
9	nº of hours of extra-mural practical training in VPH (including FSQ)		150	150	150	150
10	nº of companion animal patients seen intra-murally		580	438	382	466,7
11	nº of individual ruminant and pig patients seen intra-murally		1	0	0	0,333
12	nº of equine patients seen intra-murally		0	0	0	0
13	nº of rabbit, rodent, bird and exotic patients seen intra-murally		9	5	5	6,3
14	nº of companion animal patients seen extra-murally		1	3	6	3,3
15	nº of individual ruminants and pig patients seen extra-murally		542	447	80	356,3
16	nº of equine patients seen extra-murally		5	2	0	2,3
17	nº of rabbit, rodent, bird and exotic patients seen extra-murally		88	92	98	92,7
18	nº of visits to ruminant and pig herds		40	37	2	26,3
19	nº of visits to poultry and farmed rabbit units		5	5	6	5,3
20	nº of companion animal necropsies		15	10	9	11,3
21	nº of ruminant and pig necropsies		3	2	8	4,3
22	nº of equine necropsies		0	0	0	0,0
23	nº of rabbit, rodent, bird and exotic pet necropsies		3	0	1	1,3
24	nº of FTE specialised veterinarians involved in veterinary training		1	1	1	1,0
25	nº of PhD graduating annually		2	0	3	1,7

Findings

All ESEVT Indicators are above the minimal values, except I10, I14, I15, I16 and I17.

Analysis of the findings/Comments

The number of equine patients and necropsies in all common species are below the minimal values. The other Indicators are above the minimal values, but it is linked to the low number of students.

Suggestions

It is suggested to develop a plan for increasing the caseload of patients and cadavers.

Conclusions

The Preliminary Visitation was well organised and the PSER was provided on time and written in agreement with the SOP 2023.

The Liaison Officer did a very good job adapting the visitation schedule, searching for the requested information, organising relevant meetings and ensuring the health and safety of the visitors.

Several areas worthy of praise have been identified by the Preliminary Visitation Team, e.g. small-group teaching, one-to-one discussions between students and teachers, some well-equipped laboratories.

Additional commendations are described in the report.

The main areas of concern about the compliance of the VEE with the ESEVT Standards are:

-) Implementation of QA loops in all 10 areas;
-) Public funding for education and research and financial autonomy;
-) Hands-on clinical training, especially in equine and food-producing animals;
-) Definition, teaching, posting and implementation of biosecurity procedures;
-) Good Pharmacy Practices;
-) Caseload of patients and cadavers in common animal species;
-) Number of teaching and support staff in clinical services.

Additional suggestions for improvement are described in the report.

In conclusion, the VEE is aware of the ESEVT SOP in general and the accreditation Standards in particular. There is an ongoing process in place to achieve compliance with these Standards, and the VEE is sufficiently informed, organised and equipped to undergo a Full Visitation within 3 years.

Glossary

CCT: Core Clinical Training

D1C: ESEVT Day One Competences

EAEVE: European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education

EBVS: European Board of Veterinary Specialisation

ECOVE: European Committee on Veterinary Education

EPT: Elective Practical Training

ESEVT: European System of Evaluation of Veterinary Training

ESG: Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

FSQ: Food Safety and Quality

FTE: Full-Time Equivalent

IT: Information Technology

OSCE: Objective Structured Clinical Examination

PDCA: Plan Do Check Adjust

QA: Quality Assurance

SER: Self Evaluation Report

SOP: 2023 Standard Operating Procedure

UKIM: Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje

VEE: Veterinary Education Establishment (Faculty of Veterinary Medicine - Skopje)

VPH: Veterinary Public Health

VTH: Veterinary Teaching Hospital

Conclusion of ECOVE

The Committee supports the conclusions of the Visitation Team and agrees that the Preliminary Visitation Report provides convincing evidence of the VEE being sufficiently informed, prepared and equipped for undergoing a Full Visitation within 3 years after the Preliminary Visitation.