

AVMA Council on Education (COE) Frequently Asked Questions

Got a question ask it here coe@avma.org.

Question: How many weeks before a site visit does a school have to submit its self-study?

Answer: No later than six weeks before the site visit, the college must provide the self-study as a hard copy and in electronic format to the AVMA office. The electronic copy should be sent either by e-mail or CD ROM. Sufficient electronic and hard copies must also be prepared and shipped by the college to each site team member. Failure to file a suitable report by the deadline, and in the format specified, may result in postponement of the site visit.

Question: Do any of the veterinary schools offer a distance learning program?

Answer: No, some schools may offer a few courses on-line but none of the schools offer a complete distance learning curriculum. Contact the individual schools to learn more about their curriculum.

Question: I heard that a reciprocity agreement exists between the AVMA and foreign countries that have an AVMA-COE accredited veterinary school what does this exactly mean?

Answer: When a foreign school requests AVMA-COE accreditation the licensing body of that country must recognize that graduates of U.S. and Canadian AVMA-COE accredited veterinary schools have met the same educational standards as graduates of the AVMA-COE accredited school in that country. In addition those countries must apply the same licensing procedures and requirements to graduates of U.S. and Canadian AVMA-COE accredited schools wishing to practice in their country as to the graduates of AVMA-COE accredited schools in that country. In effect what this means is that U.S. and Canadian graduates can go to a foreign country, where a reciprocity agreement exists and practice veterinary medicine as long as they conform to the licensing requirements and immigration laws of that country and a graduate of an AVMA-COE accredited school in that country can come to the U.S. and practice veterinary medicine as long as they comply with the state licensing requirements and federal immigration laws. For more information on international accreditation see the Council's [Policy and Procedure manual](#).

Question: Do the colleges or the COE pay the expenses for a site visit?

Answer: The cost for evaluation and site visits for US and Canadian colleges are shared by those colleges and the AVMA, except for requests for reasonable assurance status

from proposed new colleges; colleges with provisional accreditation status; and when a site visit is made at the request of a college for consulting on program development not directly related to an accreditation decision; in these cases the college pays all costs. Each US and Canadian college pays the AVMA \$10,000 every seven years, the period coinciding with the normal site visit and accreditation cycle for that college. Colleges outside the US and Canada pay all expenses for a site visit.

Question: Are there any cases when the COE refuses to conduct a site visit?

Answer: The Council can deny the request for a site visit to a college in a country where conditions exist that might place the safety of the site team members at risk. In the case of a consultative visit the Council can refuse to conduct the visit if, after reviewing the self-study material, it is determined that the college falls short of meeting one or more standards.

Question: To whom does the AVMA COE answer?

Answer: The [U.S. Department of Education \(USDE\)](#) regulates educational accreditation, and the AVMA COE must adhere to its standards and follow proper reporting procedures.

AVMA COE is also recognized by a nongovernmental accreditors' recognition body called the [Council on Higher Education Accreditation \(CHEA\)](#) and must meet its requirements to remain recognized.

The AVMA COE also adheres to standards, including a Code of Good Practice, set by the [Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors \(ASPA\)](#), a professional association for accreditors.

Question: What is the code of conduct for AVMA COE members?

Answer: AVMA COE members are expected to adhere to the [confidentiality policy](#), [Statement on Integrity](#) and the [Conflict of Interest Statement](#).

Question: I understand that there are four AVMA accredited veterinary colleges in Europe. Is that the correct number, and which ones are these?

Answer: There are actually five AVMA accredited European colleges. These are: the University of London, the University College of Dublin, the State University of Utrecht, the University of Glasgow and the University of Edinburgh. [Get more information on these and other AVMA accredited colleges.](#)

Question: I'm planning on pursuing a veterinary career. What is the best veterinary school to attend?

Answer: The COE does not rank veterinary schools; nor do we recommend schools. The COE never compares schools to one another. The COE evaluates each school individually based on the 11 Standards of Accreditation. The AVMA accredited schools that adhere to these standards offer high-quality educational experiences. To find out the best school for you and your individual career goals, we suggest you [contact the schools directly](#).

Question: What are the essential aspects required in an SOP, such as controlled copies or authorizing signatures that the site visit team would look for during a visit?

Answer: The Council is not that prescriptive. A college is expected to evaluate its needs and to develop systems that meet those needs effectively. It's important to demonstrate that the SOPs are current and in use. For example, if students or faculty are asked about SOPs related to bio-security or isolation procedures, they should be aware that the SOPs exist, demonstrate some familiarity with them, and know where they are available for reference.

Question: What is an effective records retrieval system, do records have to be coded with SNOMED-CT, one of the official informatics standards for veterinary medicine, per the April 2002 AVMA Executive Board action?

Answer: The COE is not that prescriptive. A college is expected to consider what material their students and faculty need to retrieve and why (e.g. teaching purposes, retrospective studies, reference to previous cases to aid with current cases, etc.) and then design a system that meets those needs. The Council has not been concerned about "retrievability" across/among colleges. Use of SNOMED-CT is great if that serves your needs, but the Council will not be enforcing its use in the near future. That would require stakeholder comment and a lengthily phase-in period before compliance could be mandated.

Question: In performing analysis of outcomes involving student achievement, what is the percentage of absolute attrition?

Answer: Colleges are required to provide an [analysis of outcomes involving student achievement](#), including analyzing the reasons why students leave the program. The percentage of absolute attrition is the number of students who will not return, divided by the original number of students in their class when they entered the program.

Question: Is the first attrition column of [Table B](#) meant to capture all students who will not graduate with their class regardless of reason?

Answer: Yes

Question: Is the [relative attrition personal column](#) meant to capture anyone who won't graduate with their class for any reason other than academic? For example, does this

include those in a PhD program, or just those who left for a truly personal reason like a change in career goals?

Answer: This includes just those who left for a personal reason.

Question: I recently heard someone say that she graduated from a veterinary school that was “fully accredited.” Isn’t accreditation an “all or none” classification?

Answer: You are partially right about “all or none”. The AVMA Council on Education (COE) accredits DVM or equivalent educational programs. The AVMA COE assures that minimum standards in veterinary medical education are met by all AVMA-accredited colleges of veterinary medicine, and that students enrolled in those colleges receive an education which will prepare them for entry-level positions in the profession. When a student graduates from a veterinary school or college which is operating under **any** classification of AVMA-COE accreditation, the student is considered a graduate of an accredited school for purposes of licensing examinations or other certification that requires graduation from an AVMA-COE-accredited institution as a prerequisite. Different classifications of accreditation, however, do exist and reflect the compliance of an institution with the Standards of Accreditation (http://www.avma.org/education/cvea/coe_standard.asp).

Question: What does “fully accredited” mean?

Answer: Colleges which meet all Standards of Accreditation are granted **Full** Accreditation for a period of no more than seven years, contingent upon satisfactory review by the COE of annual progress reports. It is possible that one or two of the eleven standards may not be fully met, but if the COE is convinced that student outcomes are only minimally affected and that student safety is not compromised, a College may still receive a classification of Full accreditation, as long as the deficiencies are corrected within a two year time period.

Question: What happens if a college doesn’t meet the criteria for Full accreditation?

Answer: Colleges that have specific deficiencies in one or more Standards that adversely affect student outcomes or safety are granted an accreditation status of **Limited** Accreditation. Alternatively, if the College has deficiencies of a nature that, as mentioned above, only minimally affect student outcomes and do not compromise safety, in more than two of the eleven standards, Limited Accreditation may also be granted. Measures must be taken to ensure the education and safety of the students. Colleges operating under limited accreditation must, minimally, provide annual progress reports and correct the cited deficiencies within two years.

Question: What happens if a college with Limited accreditation status doesn’t correct the deficiencies?

Answer: If colleges do not correct deficiencies cited while operating under Limited Accreditation status or if evidence indicates that the severity or number of deficiencies exceed the requirements for Limited Accreditation, a college is granted a status of **Terminal** Accreditation. The college must cease enrollment of additional students and commit resources adequate to complete the education of currently enrolled students.

Question: Does the performance of a college's graduates on licensing examinations have any effect on a college's accreditation status?

Answer: Yes. If fewer than 80% of a college's graduates pass the North American Veterinary Licensing Examination (NAVLE) for two or four successive years an accreditation status of Limited or Terminal Accreditation status, respectively, may be granted.

Question: How does a new veterinary college become accredited?

Answer: Newly established colleges of veterinary medicine in the United States and Canada function under **Provisional** Accreditation, contingent upon their demonstration of plans and intent to administer a program that will comply with the Standards. Site visits by the COE are conducted during the period of Provisional accreditation, in addition to review of semi-annual reports by the college. Provisional accreditation cannot exceed five years, after which the school is visited and assessed by the COE and granted one of the other (Full, Limited, or Terminal) accreditation classifications.

Question: What happens on a site visit?

Answer: A given school has a COE site visit at not more than a seven year interval. More frequent site visits may be scheduled for colleges on limited accreditation or for a developing college still under a reasonable assurance designation. Prior to the site visit, the school completes a self-study that is presented to the site visit team no later than six weeks before the visit. The goal of the self-study is to help the school recognize its strengths and challenges and to give the site team as complete knowledge of the school as possible. The site team consists of several COE members, a representative from the state of country where the school is located, and an AVMA staff member. Up to two observers can also accompany a site team. The site visit lasts at least four days and includes inspection of the facilities and meetings and interviews with administration staff members, faculty, students, and standing committees such as admission and curriculum. This allows the site team to gather different opinions about the program. Upon completion of the visit the site team writes a Report of Evaluation and makes a recommendation for accreditation status which is presented to the full COE at its next meeting. The COE makes the final accreditation decision.

Question: What is the value of accreditation for students?

Answer: Accreditation provides assurance that veterinary colleges comply with a published set of quality standards and promotes continuous improvement in veterinary education. Accreditation protects the value of your degree. Any individual wishing to be licensed to practice veterinary medicine in any state in the United States must pass the

North American Veterinary Licensing Examination (NAVLE) and any specific state board examination required by that state. Candidates cannot take the NAVLE unless they have graduated from an AVMA COE accredited school or obtained a certificate from the Educational Commission on Foreign Veterinary Graduates (ECFVG) or Program for Assessment of Educational Equivalence (PAVE). Accreditation also makes a number of federal loans available to veterinary students.

Question: How do I find out the accreditation status of a veterinary technician school?

Answer: The COE is only involved in the accreditation of veterinary programs leading to the receipt of a DVM degree or equivalent. The AVMA's Committee on Veterinary Technician Education Activities is involved in accrediting vet tech schools. For specific information on vet tech programs and their accreditation status please consult the AVMA web site <http://www.avma.org/education/cvea/default.asp> or contact Ms. Julie Horvath at jhorvath@avma.org.

Question: Why might a school not be fully accredited?

Answer: There are 11 standards that schools must meet. If the full Council feels that any aspect of a standard is not being met, that is made clear to the school through written and verbal communications. Schools are placed on limited accreditation if they have significant deficiencies in two or more standards or if they absolutely fail to meet one or more standards. That school has two years to demonstrate resolution of deficiencies or significant progress towards resolution. Schools may request an additional two years. Once the school demonstrates compliance with the standard, full accreditation may be granted after review by the full Council.

Question: Once you're accredited, are you done? Or is there an ongoing evaluation between site visits?

Answer: Accreditation is not static. Accredited schools continue to be monitored through yearly reports which must demonstrate continual self-evaluation and improvement in all aspects of each standard. These annual reports are reviewed by members of the COE and then presented for discussion to the full Council at the spring meeting. Accreditation status may change after that meeting, with movement from limited to full accreditation if a school demonstrates correction of deficiencies or movement from full to limited if a school does not demonstrate progress toward correction of deficiencies formerly identified or if new problems arise.

Question: Where can I find a list of the current COE members?

Answer: A roster of the current COE members is available on the [COE web page](#).

Is the State University of Ghent accredited?

Question: What is the status for the State University of Ghent in Belgium? Is it AVMA COE accredited?

Answer: No, the State University of Ghent in Belgium is not accredited by the AVMA COE. Schools accredited by the COE are listed on the COE [web page](#).

Is accreditation retroactive?

Question: When would students of a newly accredited veterinary program be considered graduates of an AVMA COE accredited school? Is accreditation retroactive for all graduates or does it begin on a certain date?

Answer: Accreditation classifications are not retroactive; they apply from the date of the site visit.

Is there a COE annual report?

Question: Does the COE prepare an annual report of its accreditation activities?

Answer: No. the list of accredited school and the accreditation status of each school are updated on a continual basis. This list is forwarded to the USDE annually.