

AVMA-COE COVID-19 Policy

The provisions in the following policy are for the sole purpose of management of the COVID-19 situation.

The provisions within this policy are in effect from March 23, 2020, updated September, 1, 2020 until, in the view of the American Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education (AVMA-COE, the Council), the COVID-19 situation is resolved, or sufficiently resolved that this policy need not remain in effect.

The Council will reevaluate the plan on an as-needed basis; however, no later than at each biannual Council meeting until the policy is no longer in effect.

The AVMA-COE COVID-19 Policy applied during 2020. From January 1, 2021, the AVMA-COE deferred to the Emergency Conditions Policy for the ongoing management of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Taking into account the ongoing pandemic, the AVMA-COE COVID-19 Policy was amended in March 2021. This amendment included the option for the Council to grant an extension to the required timeline of the verification site visit, for COVID-19 related cause.

The *Accreditation Policies and Procedures Manual of the AVMA Council on Education* remains the primary source document for policies and procedures of the AVMA-COE. The following policy modifications are designed for use in response to the COVID-19 situation only. All other aspects of the AVMA-COE Policies and Procedures Manual continue to apply.

This policy was written consistent with the United States Department of Education (USDE) guidance issued to USDE Recognized Accreditors dated [March 17, 2020](#) and May 15, 2020, and the communication from the Commission for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) dated March 18, 2020.

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1. Assignment of an Accreditation Risk Category

At the Council meeting of March 23, 2020, the AVMA-COE adopted the following Accreditation Risk Category Definitions:

Risk Category	Risk Category Definition
Risk Category 1	New colleges on the AVMA-COE pathway to receipt of a Letter of Reasonable Assurance
Risk Category 2:	Colleges on Provisional Accreditation Colleges on Probationary Accreditation Colleges Accredited with Minor Deficiencies Colleges on Terminal Accreditation Colleges with focused site visits scheduled by the AVMA-COE
Risk Category 3	Accredited Colleges
Risk Category 4	Colleges outside the US and Canada seeking accreditation

Colleges of Veterinary Medicine have been assigned an accreditation risk category based on the published AVMA-COE accreditation status and schedule of site visits as of March 17, 2020.

The AVMA-COE will use the assigned risk category during the COVID-19 situation for risk-based contingency planning.

2. Site Visits

The following site visit provisions apply only to colleges with site visits scheduled for 2020.

On March 23, 2020, the AVMA Council on Education adopted the following site visit policy and rationale:

Upon authorization of AVMA Council on Education, a site visit may occur through audio and/or audiovisual means, in whole or part.

Rationale: Until March 2020, the AVMA-COE site visit included AVMA-COE personnel physically at the site or sites of the visit. In March 2020, COVID-19 caused the need for the AVMA-COE to conduct site visits that are audio and/or audiovisual (“virtual site visits.”). The functions of the virtual comprehensive site visit and the virtual focused site visit are the same as those of the comprehensive site visit and the focused site visit. Although the conduct of the virtual site visit is similar to that of the non-virtual site visit, it differs in adjustment to its modalities.

In the case where a virtual site visit is conducted, an in-person site visit will subsequently occur at the College within a period not to exceed 18 months. The Council may grant an extension of up to an additional 12 months to this time period for (COVID-19 related) cause.

If site visits are to be conducted virtually, AVMA-COE staff, the Chair of the Site Visit team, and the College will work collaboratively to determine the most appropriate modalities and Site Visit schedule to facilitate the visit.

Risk Category	Site Visit
Risk category 1	The AVMA-COE will work individually with the College to address accreditation issues. Options include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delay of the scheduled site visit • Virtual site visit to be followed by an in-person site visit within 18 months The AVMA-COE will discuss the options with the College and decide how to proceed.
Risk category 2	Options are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delay of the scheduled site visit • Virtual site visit to be followed by an in-person site visit within 18 months The AVMA-COE will discuss the options with the College and decide how to proceed.
Risk category 3	Options are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delay of the scheduled site visit • Virtual site visit to be followed by an in-person site visit within 18 months • Continued planning of site visit at currently scheduled date if COVID-19 situation allows The AVMA-COE will discuss the options with the College and decide how to proceed.
Risk category 4	Colleges in Risk Categories 1, 2, and 3 will have scheduling preference over Colleges in Risk Category 4. Options are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delay of the scheduled site visit • Continued planning of site visit at currently scheduled date if AVMA-COE schedule and COVID-19 situation allows. The AVMA-COE will discuss the options with the College and decide how to proceed.

3. Accreditation Interval

For colleges in Risk Categories 2 and 3, the AVMA-COE has authorized a temporary COVID-19 extension of the accreditation interval by a period not to exceed 18 months.

Where a temporary extension to the accreditation interval is granted to a college, the next re-accreditation interval may be, at the discretion of the Council, shortened by a period of time no longer than the extension granted.

4. Accreditation Status

The definitions of accreditation status remain as per the Policies and Procedures Manual, with the one exception as per below:

The time period of resolution for deficiencies may be extended for (COVID-19 related) cause, by up to 18 months under the COVID-19 Policy.

5. Reporting to the AVMA-COE

5.1 Self-Study Reports

For colleges that have submitted self-study reports up to and including March 23, 2020, the submitted self-study can form the basis of the self-study report for the rescheduled site visit, with updates to the self-study where appropriate.

5.2 Substantive Change Reports

The AVMA-COE granted a temporary waiver of the requirement for prior approval for the following substantive changes related to the COVID-19 situation (Letter to Deans of March 17, 2020):

- The addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure, either in content or method of delivery, from those that were offered when the AVMA-COE last evaluated the institution
- A change in the clock hours (student contact hours) to credit hours ratio
- A substantial change in the number of clock hours (student contact hours) or credit hours awarded for successful completion of the program

Colleges will be expected to update the AVMA-COE in the annual interim report for all changes related to the COVID-19 situation.

Appendix 1: Virtual Site Visit Verification Policy

This policy is an addendum to the [AVMA-COE COVID-19 Policy](#) (03-23-2020, updated 09-01-2020).

The provisions in this policy are for the sole purpose of management of the COVID-19 situation.

This policy is in effect from 09-01-2020, until, in the discretion of the American Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education (AVMA-COE, the Council), the COVID-19 situation is resolved, or sufficiently resolved that this policy need not remain in effect.

The Accreditation Policies and Procedures Manual of the AVMA-COE remains the primary source document for policies and procedures of the AVMA-COE. The following policy modifications are designed for use in response to the COVID-19 situation only. All other aspects of the AVMA-COE Policies and Procedures Manual continue to apply.

The AVMA-COE COVID-19 Policy (03-23-2020, updated 09-01-2020) specifies that *‘in the case where a virtual site visit is conducted, an in-person site visit will occur at the College within a period not to exceed 18 months.’* In March of 2021, this policy statement was updated to state *‘The Council may grant an extension of up to an additional 12 months to this time period for (COVID-19 related) cause.’*

The term ‘Virtual Site Visit Verification’ is used to satisfy the USDE requirement for an in-person site visit after a virtual site visit (“verification visit”). The verification visit may provide additional information to the AVMA-COE, at the discretion of the AVMA-COE, or as otherwise noted during the verification visit.

Verification Visit Team

The Verification Visit Team will consist of no less than two (2) AVMA-COE trained site visitors, with one (1) AVMA-COE Observer. The Verification Visit Team will be supported by one (1) staff member. Preferably, the Verification Visit Team would have also been members of the Virtual Visit Team, and ideally, the Chair of the Virtual Visit would Chair the Verification Visit.

To accomplish the agenda of the Verification Visit, the size of the Verification Visit Team for an individual visit may be increased by the Chair of the Evaluation Committee.

Verification Visit Agenda

The Council will determine the Verification Visit agenda. Noting, where appropriate, and linked to the Standards of Accreditation, specific areas of verification the Council is seeking.

The duration of the Verification Visit will depend on the agenda set by the Council.

An agenda template for the Verification Visit is included below.

Agenda Item	Standards Addressed	Goal of the Meeting
Day 1		
Required Items		
Meeting: Dean +/- selected administration		Overview of the Verification Visit
Facilities Confirmation	Physical Facilities and Equipment	Confirm the presence of facilities viewed during the virtual site visit, which may

Agenda Item	Standards Addressed	Goal of the Meeting
		include a visit to on-campus and/or off-campus facilities as directed by the Council.
Optional Items as Directed by the Council		
<i>Lunch</i>		
Meeting: DVM Students (If appropriate)	Students, Curriculum, Admissions, Organization, Physical Facilities and Equipment, Clinical Resources,	Provide an in-person opportunity to gather students' impressions/ concerns regarding all aspects of their experience in veterinary school. Pose specific questions (if any) requested by the Council.
Optional Additional Meetings	As directed by the Council	As directed by the Council
Day 2		
Optional Visits to on- or off-campus sites	Physical Facilities and Equipment Clinical Resources	As directed by the Council
Meeting: Exit Interview with the Dean		Summary of the Verification Visit
Optional Meeting: Exit Interview with university administration		Summary of the Verification Visit

Verification Visit Report

The Verification Visit Team will prepare a report to the Council, using the Verification Visit Rubric. The report will reference the agenda directed by the Council, and (1) confirm (or not) the presence of facilities viewed during the virtual site visit, and (2) provide additional comments, broken down by appropriate Standard, if directed by the Council, or as otherwise noted during the verification visit.

The draft of the Verification Visit Report will be sent to the Dean for correction of factual errors.

The Verification Visit Team will review the Dean's comments, and amend the report, or provide comments, as appropriate, prior to submission of the report to the Council.

Council Deliberations

The Council may make an accreditation decision based on a Virtual Site Visit preceding the Verification Visit. That accreditation decision is not contingent on the Verification Visit.

The Council will consider the report from the Verification Visit. The Verification Visit may or may not result in the Council making an accreditation decision.

Ends.