

Changes to Accreditation Standards, December 2023

<https://avmasitestg.prod.acquia-sites.com/sites/default/files/2023-12/Dec-2023-Revised->

Standard 1, ORGANIZATION

Accreditation is a voluntary process. To achieve accreditation or remain accredited, the institution must comply with Council policies, processes, procedures, and directives.

The college must develop and follow its mission statement.

An accredited college of veterinary medicine must be a part of an institution of higher learning accredited by an organization recognized for that purpose by its country's government. A college may be accredited only when it is a major academic administrative division of the parent institution and is afforded the same recognition, status, and autonomy as other professional colleges in that institution.

The chief executive officer/dean must be a veterinarian. This individual must be employed full-time with a faculty appointment within the college throughout the calendar year, without conflicting outside employment or activities. Any secondary employment or activities must be approved and monitored by the parent institution and must not conflict with the CEO/dean's commitment to, or the interests of, the college. The CEO/dean is responsible for the ongoing development and administration of the college and must have sufficient qualifications, experience, and time to provide effective leadership. There must be a clear definition of the CEO's/dean's authority and responsibility for the veterinary medical education program. This individual must have overall budgetary and supervisory authority necessary to assure compliance with accreditation standards. The officer(s) responsible for the professional, ethical, and academic affairs of the veterinary medical teaching hospital(s) or equivalent must also be veterinarians.

There must be sufficient administrative staff to adequately manage the affairs of the college as appropriate to the enrollment and operation.

The college must have and follow a statement on diversity, equity, and inclusion, consistent with applicable law. The college must create and promote an institutional structure and climate that does not discriminate and seeks to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion, consistent with applicable law. Diversity may include, but is not limited to, race, color, religion, ethnicity, age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, first language, cultural and socioeconomic background, national origin, tribal membership, citizen status, and disability. The college or institution must establish a reliable, effective reporting and response system, and, if warranted, a process to remedy instances of discrimination and other forms of harassment involving faculty, staff and students.

Rationale for Change(s):

The senior administration of a college are critical to provide leadership for the governance of a program. Therefore, the dean must have the time and capacity to fully engage in the work of creating and managing a college and all the elements thereof. Concurrent appointment as a member of the faculty is considered essential given the role of the CEO/dean in promotion and tenure of other faculty. That individual must also refrain from engaging in outside activities that could potentially conflict with the best interests of the program and its stakeholders.

Council response to public comment:

Few comments were received on this Standard; of those that were, many were positive while others requested clarity on intent. Specifically, further clarification on who would administer judgement over a conflict of interest was requested. Based on such comments, revisions were made to stipulate that it is the institutions purview to determine what activities constitute a conflict of interest or a conflict of commitment.

Standard 4, CLINICAL RESOURCES

Normal and diseased animals of various domestic and exotic species must be available for instructional purposes. Normal animals can be provided by the institution in on or off-campus settings, or be client owned animals presented for preventive veterinary medical care, on or off-campus. Diseased animals must include client-owned clinical patients with spontaneous diseases presented for veterinary medical care or testing in on or off-campus environments. While precise numbers are not specified, in-hospital patients and outpatients including animals presented for preventative medical management, animals with problems commonly seen in general practice, animals with complex problems receiving specialized care, and animals seen in ~~including~~ field service/ambulatory and herd health/production settings are required to provide direct hands-on experiences for all students. ~~medicine programs are required to provide the necessary quantity and quality of clinical instruction.~~ The program must be able to demonstrate, using its assessment of clinical competency outcomes data, that the clinical resources are sufficient to achieve the stated educational goals and mission and comply with the Standards of Accreditation.

It is essential that a diverse and sufficient number of surgical and medical patients be available during on-campus and off-campus clinical activities for students' clinical educational experience. Experience can include exposure to clinical education at off-campus sites, provided the college regularly, via in-person or virtual interpersonal communication with students and off-campus instructors reviews and monitors these clinical experiences and educational outcomes.

All required clinical training sites must demonstrate a commitment to instructional quality. Further, such clinical experiences ~~should~~ must take place across settings that provide ~~access to subject matter experts, direct interactions with and supervision by veterinarians who have been trained to educate students.~~ All students must actively participate in managing normal and diseased, client-owned, clinical patients at required clinical training sites. Required clinical training sites must include both general practices in which students are supervised by experienced veterinary practitioners, as well as specialty practices supervised by experienced board-certified specialists. All required clinical training sites must provide access to reference resources, modern and complete clinical laboratories, advanced diagnostic instrumentation and ready confirmation of diagnosis (including necropsy). ~~Such examples~~ Clinical experiences could include ~~a contractual arrangements with practitioners veterinarians who serve as adjunct faculty educators at off-campus clinical sites, and as well as veterinarians who work at~~ off-campus field practice centers.

The required on-campus and off-campus clinical training sites must provide nursing care and instruction in nursing procedures, as well as instruction in managing health care teams. Veterinary personnel who provide technical education should be credentialed as appropriate to the jurisdiction. A supervised field service and/or ambulatory program must be ~~maintained in which students are offered multiple opportunities~~ operated by the college or by a privately operated field service/ambulatory practice(s) that is (are) contracted to provide ~~to obtain~~ clinical experiences for students under field conditions.

Under all situations, students must be active participants in the workup of the patient, including physical diagnosis and diagnostic problem-oriented decision making.

Medical records must be comprehensive and maintained in an effective retrieval system to efficiently support the teaching, research, and service programs of the college. Students must ~~be trained~~ [actively participate](#) in the use of an electronic medical records system [within a clinical setting during the care of patients](#).

Rationale for Change(s):

Student education from general and specialist practitioners is critical to ensure an adequate understanding of certain disease processes and interventions which may require referral, and of the entire referral process, including case selection and the role of the general practitioner in preparing the patient and the client for specialty care.

Ensuring that students receive training on a variety of species and in various clinical, field, and herd/production settings is consistent with the scope of practice for which the licensure students graduating from accredited institutions are eligible.

Amendment relevant to veterinary personnel credentialing is proposed to ensure a consistency in the quality of education provided to students by veterinary personnel, such as veterinary technicians and nurses.

Modifications to the language surrounding the use of medical records have been made to ensure consistent opportunities for students.

Table H, which is found in the self-study guidelines and in annual interim reporting, is updated to be consistent with expectations for off-campus clinical training sites.

Council response to public comment:

Most comments were focused on confusion about whether all clinical training in the proposed updates would have to occur at sites that employed both general practitioners and specialists, rather than that clinical training must ultimately involve both, though not necessarily at the same site. As the latter was the original intent of the update, the language was revised to better reflect the objective. Comments also reflected concerns about the inherent ability of a boarded specialist (versus another veterinarian) to perform effectively as an educator; now added is the stipulation that all such educators must be trained to teach students.

Language was also revised minimally to allow that ambulatory/field service practices did not need to be “maintained” by the college for student education, but could also be operated by outside, contracted agencies.

Some comments were received expressing concern that use of the phrase “adjunct faculty” to describe those providing education at off-site facilities was restrictive. Given that all programs will not grant adjunct status to all veterinarians at all clinical training sites, language was changed to “educators at off-campus clinical sites”.

Standard 6, STUDENTS

The number of professional degree students in all phases of the program, DVM or equivalent, must be consistent with the resources and the mission of the college. The program must be able to demonstrate, using its outcomes assessment data, that the resources are sufficient to achieve the stated educational goals for all veterinary students engaged in its programs.

All students must have direct experiences with veterinarians who are in post-DVM programs, including internships and residencies, to provide understanding of these career paths. Experiences with interns and residents must include experiences in a clinical setting. All students must have direct experiences with individuals (ideally veterinarians) who are ~~The college must expose students to opportunities in post-DVM programs such as internships, residencies, fellowships, and~~ pursuing advanced degrees (e.g., MS, PhD). Colleges should establish such post-DVM programs that complement and strengthen the professional program. Such programs must not adversely affect the veterinary student experience. ~~The college must expose students to post-DVM programs.~~

Student support services must be available, accessible, and publicized within the college or university. Colleges must provide or facilitate access to support services to students when engaged in off-campus learning experiences. These must include, but are not limited to, appropriate services to support student wellness and to assist with meeting the academic and personal challenges of the DVM program; support for students with learning or other disabilities; support diversity, equity, and inclusion awareness programs for students; and support of extra-curricular activities relevant to veterinary medicine and professional growth.

The college or parent institution must provide information and access to counselling services regarding financial aid, debt management, and career advising. Career advising must include selection of clinical experiences.

The college must promote an institutional climate and culture that fosters diversity, equity, and inclusion, within the student body, consistent with applicable law.

In relationship to enrollment, the colleges must provide accurate information for all advertisements regarding the educational program by providing clear and current information for prospective students. Further, printed catalog or electronic information must state the purpose and goals of the program, provide admission requirements and procedures, state degree requirements, present faculty descriptions, provide an accurate academic calendar, clearly state information on educational cost and debt risk, for the college. The college must provide information on procedures for withdrawal including the refund of student's tuition and fees allowable. Information available to prospective students must include relevant requirements for professional licensure. This must include an indication of which US states the college's curriculum meets, does not meet, or it is undetermined whether it meets the requirements for professional licensure, as applicable.

Each accredited college must notify students and provide a mechanism for students, anonymously if they wish, to offer suggestions, comments, and complaints regarding compliance of the college with the Standards of Accreditation. These materials shall be made available to the Council annually.

Rationale for Change(s):

Postgraduate education is a common and important career opportunity which students are best educated about through direct interactions with and observation of those pursuing training. Language

has been added to ensure this education and to provide students with a tangible understanding of such career paths. Such language now also includes both interns and residents, with the intent to ensure experiences with specialists-in-training.

Council response to public comment:

Both negative and positive comments were received regarding the requirement for post-graduate exposure. Additional comments requested clarification to the language provided. Multiple comments pointed out the difficulty of accessing veterinarians pursuing advanced degrees, such as Masters and PhDs, for student exposure, while others requested clarification over the term “exposure”. While the intent remains for veterinary students to understand career opportunities and journeys available to veterinarians, specifically, language was adjusted to replace the term “exposure” with “direct experiences” and to allow for such experiences with “individuals (ideally veterinarians) who are pursuing advanced degrees”.

Fewer comments addressed the language regarding the requirement of experience with interns and residents. These comments argued that such individuals were unlikely to be consistently good educators. Language was added to the end of the sentence to clarify that experiences with interns and residents is “to provide understanding of these career paths”

Standard 8, FACULTY

Faculty numbers and qualifications must be sufficient to deliver the educational program and fulfill the mission of the college. [Instruction in the pre-clinical and clinical setting must be delivered by faculty who have education, training, expertise, professional development, or a combination thereof, appropriate for the subject matter.](#) Participation in scholarly activities is an important criterion in evaluating the faculty and the college. The college must provide evidence that it utilizes a well-defined and comprehensive program for the evaluation of professional growth, development, and scholarly activities of the faculty.

Academic positions must offer the security and benefits necessary to maintain stability, continuity, and competence of the faculty. The college must cultivate a diverse faculty through its hiring policies and retention practices, consistent with applicable law. Search committees must be trained on best practices resulting in inclusive searches, including recognizing and addressing bias in the search process. The college must strive to create an inclusive and supportive environment for all faculty. The college must demonstrate its ongoing efforts to achieve parity in advancement opportunities and compensation for all faculty members, as consistent with applicable law. Part-time faculty, [locum tenens](#), residents, and graduate students may supplement the teaching efforts of the full-time permanent faculty if appropriately integrated into the instructional program

Rationale for Change(s):

Student education is best provided by those with a commitment to teaching and with the education, training, expertise, professional development, or a combination thereof, appropriate for the subject matter provided. Those receiving specialized training in areas such as (but not limited to) surgery, medicine, and anesthesia gain and can provide foundational knowledge critical to first day

practitioners in a manner beyond the expertise of a non-specialty trained veterinarian. This knowledge base is essential for the training of a competent general practitioner.

Utilizing an expanded definition for educator qualifications beyond board certification, to include education, additional training, professional development, and experiences, provides broader dimensions through which to evaluate those who are not boarded in a discipline and recognize them as excellent educators.

With the increasing frequency of part time faculty appointment (FTE appointment at < 1.0), this appointment is functionally and contractually distinct from locum tenens, who has no standing employment and works as a contractor on an as-needed basis. The differences of availability and integration of part-time versus locum faculty may affect student education in dissimilar ways.

Council response to public comment:

Most comments received relayed confusion over the information requested in the updated version of Table D, to adequately reflect individual faculty qualifications. The table, and directions for use of the table, were revised to provide more clear guidance.

Standard 9, CURRICULUM

The curriculum shall extend over a period equivalent to a minimum of four academic years, including a minimum of one academic year of hands-on clinical education. The curriculum and educational process should initiate and promote lifelong learning in each professional degree candidate.

The curriculum in veterinary medicine is the purview of the faculty of each college, but must be managed centrally based upon the mission and resources of the college. There must be sufficient flexibility in curriculum planning and management to facilitate timely revisions in response to emerging issues, and advancements in knowledge and technology. The curriculum must be guided by a college curriculum committee. The curriculum as a whole must be reviewed at least every seven (7) years. The majority of the members of the curriculum committee must be full-time faculty. Curriculum evaluations should include the gathering of sufficient qualitative and quantitative information to assure the curriculum content provides current concepts and principles as well as instructional quality and effectiveness.

The curriculum must provide:

- a. an understanding of the central biological principles and mechanisms that underlie animal health and disease from the molecular and cellular level to organismal and population manifestations.
- b. scientific, discipline-based instruction in an orderly and concise manner so that students gain an understanding of normal function, homeostasis, pathophysiology, mechanisms of health/disease, and the natural history and manifestations of important animal diseases, both domestic and foreign.
- c. instruction in both the theory and practice of medicine and surgery applicable to a broad range of species. The instruction must include principles and hands-on experiences in physical and laboratory diagnostic methods and interpretation (including diagnostic imaging, diagnostic pathology, and necropsy), disease prevention, biosecurity, therapeutic intervention (including

surgery and dentistry), and patient management and care (including intensive care, emergency medicine and isolation procedures) involving clinical diseases of individual animals and populations. Instruction should emphasize problem solving that results in making and applying medical judgments. [Instruction in these areas must provide exposure to the wide range of veterinary care options.](#)

- d. instruction in the principles of epidemiology, zoonoses, food safety, [antimicrobial stewardship](#), the interrelationship of animals and the environment, and the contribution of the veterinarian to the overall public and professional healthcare teams.
- e. opportunities for students to learn how to acquire information from clients (e.g. history) and about patients (e.g. medical records), to obtain, store and retrieve such information, and to communicate effectively with clients and colleagues.
- f. opportunities throughout the curriculum for students to gain an understanding of professional ethical, legal, economic, and regulatory principles related to the delivery of veterinary medical services; personal and business finance and management skills; and gain an understanding of the breadth of veterinary medicine, career opportunities and other information about the profession.
- g. Opportunities throughout the curriculum for students to gain and integrate an understanding of the important influences of diversity, equity, and inclusion in veterinary medicine, including the impact of implicit bias related to an individual's personal circumstance on the delivery of veterinary medical services.
- h. knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, aptitudes and behaviors necessary to address responsibly the health and well-being of animals in the context of ever-changing societal expectations.
- i. fair and equitable assessment of student progress. The grading system for the college must be relevant and applied to all students in a fair and uniform manner.

Rationale for Change(s):

To build in the intent of a range of care to the hands-on, clinical learning curriculum of the students' education and the wide variety of veterinary services that can be offered.

To include antimicrobial stewardship as a fundamental learning issue of emerging importance in veterinary medicine and One Health

Council response to public comment:

Very few comments received, most of which were positive. No additional revisions made.

Standard 10, RESEARCH PROGRAMS

[The college must foster and support an environment and culture of scientific inquiry.](#) The college must maintain substantial research activities of high quality that integrate with and strengthen the professional program, [such as basic science, clinical science, or scholarship in teaching and learning.](#) Continuing scholarly productivity within the college must be demonstrated and the college must provide

[access to](#) opportunities for any interested students in the professional veterinary program to be exposed to or participate in on-going high-quality research. All students must receive training in the principles, ~~and~~ application, [and ethics](#) of research methods and in the appraisal and integration of research into veterinary medicine and animal health.

Rationale for Change(s):

During review of the 2022 Accreditation Survey, various stakeholder groups conveyed 1) a perspective that too much emphasis was placed on extramural funding, and 2) a lack of clear relevance of research to clinical practice. Language and tables have been added to the Standard and the Self Study Language to emphasize the connection between research and clinical practice, including the use of language for research related to teaching and learning has been added. Additional opportunity and for schools (including those in the developmental stages) to demonstrate productivity and structural support for research that does not rely solely on extramural agency funding has also been included through the use of a table documenting intramural and startup funding at the college level.

Council response to public comment:

Multiple very positive comments were received regarding the inclusion of the term “pedagogy”; this word was replaced with the phrase “scholarship in teaching and learning” to more broadly reflect the discipline. While some concern was expressed regarding whether the new language would be restrictive of current or future areas of research, the use of the modifier “such as” is intended to prevent such narrow interpretation.

Multiple positive, and few negative, comments were also received regarding the inclusion of intramural and startup funds as an additional method for a program to demonstrate research support and activity. The table has been adjusted to only require college (not department) level reporting and that monetary value should be expressed as a total of all individual allotments. To further clarify other concerns, startup and pilot funding will be fairly assessed as a reflection of new faculty hires and not as a standalone number.

Lastly, while some suggested moving “ethics of research” into Standard 9, given that other educational requirements surrounding research are contained within Standard 10, no changes were made.