VETERINARY COUNCIL OF IRELAND

_____

VETERINARY NURSING PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION

Visitation Report

VETERINARY COUNCIL OF IRELAND

_____

VISITATION AND PROGRAMME DETAILS					
Name of school:	Letterkenny Institute of Technology				
Nature of visit:	Initial accreditation		Re-accreditation	✓	Interim inspection
Names of Chair and Visitation Panel:	Bertil Douw D.V.M. (Chairperson)		Arjan van Rossum		
	Julie Dugmore (ACOVENE)				
	Paula Sanfey RVN				
Date of visit:	23 – 24 November 2020				
School liaison officer for this visit:	Dr Joanne Gallagher				
VCI liaison officer for this visit:	Yvonne Reville				

Nature of courses for delivery/delivered:						
Higher education	✓	Further education				
Small animal	✓	Equine	✓	Farm (food-producing) animal	✓	

Pattern of delivery:				
Full-time:	✓	Part-time (day or block-release from employment)		

Name of veterinary nursing award achieved by students:

Bachelor of Science in Veterinary Nursing

Is this award nationally accredited?			Yes	✓	No	
Name of accrediting body:	Veterinary Council of Ireland					

Intakes and student numbers: _Please indicate day of week students in college (day-release)_

1st year	Intakes per year	31	Students per intake at present:	31
	Month(s) commenced	3	Maximum VCI- approved capacity:	35
2nd year	Intakes per year	31	Students per intake at present:	31
	Month(s) commenced	3	Maximum VCI-approved capacity:	35
3rd year (if applicable)	Intakes per year	30	Students per intake at present:	30
	Month(s) commenced	3	Maximum VCI- approved capacity:	35

_____

STANDARD 1 INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION

Standard	Standard is Met	Standard is not Met (Specify Major/Moderate/ Minor Deficiency)
1.1 An accredited veterinary nursing programme in Ireland must normally be part of an institution accredited to provide higher and/or further education by National Authorities.	✓	

Evidence Examined related to this Standard
• LyIT Overview video • Meeting with Head of School & Head of Department • Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) accreditation

Comments

Commendations

Recommendations

_____

STANDARD 2   FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Standard	Standard is Met	Standard is not Met (Specify Major/Moderate/Minor Deficiency)
2.1 The programme must demonstrate adequate and sustainable financial resources to support its educational goals and support its mission	✓	
Evidence Examined • Video of facilities (Veterinary Nursing Team at LyIT) • LyIT support services • Application for Veterinary Nursing programme accreditation 2020 (section 2) • Equipment list (appendix 8) • 2018 laboratory facilities update • Meeting with Head of School & Head of Department		
Comments No rolling budget for broken / old equipment, but able to request / source funding centrally as required for continuation of the programme. Additional costs due to Covid-19 in the areas of: • Transport • PPE • Additional Staff costs		
Commendations Programme generally well resourced.		
Recommendations		

_____

STANDARD 3. ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

Standard	Standard is Met	Standard is not Met (Specify Major/Moderate/Minor Deficiency)
3.1 The programme must develop and follow an appropriate mission statement	X	minor deficiency
Evidence Examined Strategic Plan 2019-2023 Self-Evaluation form 1.13 Discussion with: ▪ Head of School ▪ Head of Department ▪ President ▪ VP for Academic Affairs and Registrar ▪ VP for Finance and Corporate Services		
Comments The overarching mission statement for Letterkenny Institute of Technology is contained within the Strategic Plan. Although there is a set of aims and objectives for the veterinary nursing programme, there is no specific mission statement.		
Commendations		
Recommendations Develop and implement a mission statement specific for the veterinary nursing programme		

Standard	Standard is Met	Standard is not Met (Specify Major/Moderate/Minor Deficiency)

3.2 The authority of the Programme Director, Organisational Structure, and Line Management of all staff contributing to the programme must be clearly defined	✓	

Evidence Examined

Organisational charts
Minutes of meetings:
- Programme Board
- Student Committee Report

Panel discussion

Comments

The organisational charts provided clearly demonstrate articulation of the VN Department within the organisation as a whole. There are clear lines of communication between the Head of Department and teaching team. The teaching team indicated they are well supported.

Commendations

Recommendations

_____

Standard	Standard is Met	Standard is not Met (Specify Major/Modearate/Minor Deficiency)
3.3 Policies, procedures, and marketing information for the programme must be clear and transparent, and must be consistent with those provided for all students of the parent institution	✓	

Evidence Examined
Web-site has extensive information incl. videos for prospective students. Student handbook is available for all with extensive additional information. Programme videos Panel discussion with students

Comments
Marketing material is clear and transparent. 1st year students should be provided with clear information on placement requirements and their involvement in the sourcing of placements.

Commendations

Recommendations

Standard	Standard is Met	Standard is not Met (Specify Major/Moderate/Minor Deficiency)
3.4 Opportunities for feedback on the programme must be provided to students, teaching staff and employers, and evidence should be provided on how this feedback is used to inform programme development	✓	

Evidence Examined

- Module feedback questionnaires
- Programme year feedback questionnaires
- Involvement of staff and students in the programme boards

Minutes of meetings:
- Programme Board
- Student Committee Report
- External Examiner Report

Discussions with the course team

Work placement feedback forms

Self-Assessment Report

Comments

The course team indicated that opportunity to review is built into the programme through module and annual feedback sessions which all go through the Programme Board. There is also flexibility to make rapid changes as and when the need arises.

Students and support staff agreed that feedback was listened to and, where necessary, acted upon.

Commendations

Recommendations

_____

STANDARD 4. HUMAN RESOURCES

Standard	Standard is Met	Standard is not Met (Specify Major/Moderate/Minor Deficiency)
4.1 Institutions must provide sufficient numbers of teaching and support staff to underpin delivery of educational goals and student support	✓	

Evidence Examined

- Annual VCI Reports for previous years
- Application for Veterinary Nursing programme accreditation 2020 (section 3)
- Self-Assessment Report Form 3.1
- Panel discussion with the course team

Comments

Commendations

Recommendations

_____

Standard	Standard is Met	Standard is not Met (Specify Major/Moderate/Minor Deficiency)
4.2 The Programme Director must have sufficient authority and support to manage the programme according to its mission statement	✓	

Evidence Examined
Panel discussion with the course team Minutes of meetings

Comments
There is no specific VN Department mission statement however, as identified in section 3.2, there are clear lines of communication with the Head of Department. Head of Department is responsible for delivery of the programme in close collaboration with the programme team

Commendations
Close collaboration between programme team is evident from discussions and clear partnership with Head of Department / School

Recommendations

Standard	Standard is Met	Standard is not Met (Specify Major/Moderate/Minor Deficiency)
4.3 Veterinary nurses should be included among those providing instruction, and clinical instruction must involve veterinary nurses and veterinary practitioners, ensuring that legal provisions on the practice of veterinary medicine in Ireland are respected.	✓	

Evidence Examined

- Application for Veterinary Nursing programme accreditation 2020 (section 3)
- Annual VCI Reports from previous years
- Panel discussion with the course team

Comments

There are currently three permanent full time Registered Veterinary Nurses and one veterinary practitioner supporting the programme.

Commendations

Recommendations

_____

Standard	Standard is Met	Standard is not Met (Specify Major/Moderate/Minor Deficiency)
4.4 Provision of clinical instruction outside the institution, by those not directly employed, must be accompanied by appropriate training for all individuals involved in supervising student placement	X	minor deficiency
Evidence Examined Guidelines Work Placement 2020 Panel discussion with the course team Panel discussion with clinical practice staff		
Comments Face-to-face training and standardisation of practice staff appears to be somewhat challenging and is generally conducted during practice visits. Letterkenny provides detailed guidance notes within the work placement documentation.		
Commendations		
Recommendations - Training and standardisation for work placement supervisors should be developed and implemented.		

Standard	Standard is Met	Standard is not Met (Specify Major/Moderate/Minor Deficiency)
4.5 Teaching staff must have appropriate opportunities for continuing professional development	✓	

Evidence Examined

Self-Assessment Report Form
CPD Policy
Panel discuss with course team, Head of School and Head of Department
Appendix 5

Comments

Opportunities for CPD are supported and available as required

The course team agreed that there are lots of opportunity for CPD.
Most lecturers on the programme have completed a Master's in Teaching and Learning. This upskilling, along with workshops provided by the specialised unit has proved valuable for the development and delivery of (on-line) lectures and practicals.

Two of the three veterinary nurses are currently also working in practice.

Commendations

Most lecturing staff have completed additional qualification in Learning and Teaching (Masters level)

Recommendations

Standard	Standard is Met	Standard is not Met (Specify Major/Moderate/Minor Deficiency)
5.1 Classrooms, lecture halls, practical classrooms and other teaching spaces must be maintained and cleaned regularly, have adequate capacity for the number of students enrolled, and be appropriately equipped	✓	

Evidence Examined

Video presentations
Self-Assessment Report Form
Equipment lists
Panel discussion with Course Director
Panel discussion with students
Additional vet lab introduced in 2018 appears to have a wide range of equipment

Student Covid 19 induction video outlines regular (additional) cleaning is taking place

Comments

Information within the video presentations indicate that facilities are currently cleaned more frequently due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This was supported during student discussions

Commendations

Recommendations

_____

Standard	Standard is Met	Standard is not Met (Specify Major/Moderate/Minor Deficiency)
5.2 Clinical facilities, including clinical skills laboratories and simulated facilities, must be representative of contemporary veterinary facilities in Ireland.	✓	

Evidence Examined

- Videos provided on college and facilities
- Application for Veterinary Nursing programme accreditation 2020 (section 6)
- Panel discussion with the course team
- Equipment list provided

Comments

The development of a new laboratory facilities, also used for the veterinary nursing course, in 2018 demonstrates a commitment to the veterinary nursing programmes. As mentioned in section 2.1, the programme is financially well supported. There appears to be a wide range of clinical facilities available to veterinary nursing students in the vet lab – all areas of the veterinary practice are covered.

Students would benefit from having access to OSCE practice opportunities

Commendations

Recommendations

Standard	Standard is Met	Standard is not Met (Specify Major/Moderate/Minor Deficiency)
5.3 Adequate space must be provided for administrative requirements of the programme, and for pastoral support of students	✓	

Evidence Examined

Pastoral support information available through the web-site and videos provided.
Video presentation
The Curve - a learning hub and support centre available to students.

Comments

Commendations

Specific learning support unit available to students withing the college (The Curve)

Recommendations

_____

Standard	Standard is Met	Standard is not Met (Specify Major/Moderate/Minor Deficiency)
5.4 Adequate safeguards must be in place to ensure the safety of students and staff, and of animals that may be used for instructional purposes	X	minor deficiency

Evidence Examined
Documents & videos provided Self-Assessment Report 6.4 Discussions with managerial and lecturing staff involved with the Veterinary Nursing programme Department of Science Risk Assessment document (Rev. 5.1)

Comments
Regarding the current Covid-19 pandemic: The video presentations identified the appropriate health and safety restrictions are in place. Increased PPE has been purchased and each student cohort size has been reduced to accommodate the current social distancing guidelines. Increased cleaning protocols are in place.

Commendations

Recommendations
-   The institute should undertake and implement a risk assessment for all animals used in the practical teaching for veterinary nursing to ensure animal welfare

_____

Standard	Standard is Met	Standard is not Met (Specify Major/Moderate/Minor Deficiency)
5.5 Facilities must be such as to provide for compliance with legislation impinging on the practice of veterinary medicine, including Animal Remedies Regulations	✓	

Evidence Examined

Panel discussion with:
- Head of School
- Head of Department
- President
- VP for Academic Affairs and Registrar
- VP for Finance and Corporate Services

Panel discussion with the course team
Self-assessment Form 6.18

Video presentation

Comments

There are facilities that replicate a Dangerous Drugs safe and a method of recording these – this is done with dummy bottles/boxes in order to comply with legislation

Commendations

Recommendations

_____

STANDARD 6. CLINICAL INSTRUCTION

Standard	Standard is Met	Standard is not Met (Specify Major/Moderate/Minor Deficiency)
6.1 The Programme must be provided with access to domestic animals in their normal settings, and in clinical environments, to ensure adequate instruction in animal handling and in clinical veterinary nursing procedures.	X	minor deficiency

Evidence Examined
Self-Assessment Report Form Panel discussion with the course team Lurgybrack farm – used for handling and clinical nursing procedures.

Comments
The practice placement model consists of 6 weeks each semester with a total of six placement opportunities throughout the programme. Placements are currently challenging and some minor amendments to the pattern of placement has had to be accommodated for a small number of students. Students are prepared for placement through completion of the Animal Husbandry module which consists of practical sessions at Lurgybrack farm These sessions are taught by Letterkenny academic staff and are currently restricted to small group teaching for three hours twice weekly. The programme also incorporates visits to a wildlife centre, zoo, aquarium and bird sanctuary.

Commendations

Recommendations
Adequate training in animal handling of live dogs & cats should be completed before going out on the first placement

Standard	Standard is Met	Standard is not Met (Specify Major/Moderate/Minor Deficiency)
6.2 There must be a written agreement with clinical placement providers and other organisations contributing to the veterinary nursing programme	X	minor deficiency

Evidence Examined

- Agreements in place for Veterinary Practices –
- Placement Memorandum of Understanding

Comments

There does not appear to be an MoU with all the off-site practical providers: Work placement agreements are in place with Veterinary Practices, but there is a lack of documented agreements with other sites used for teaching (Exotics, avian, zoo, aquarium, Lurgybrack farm).

Commendations

Recommendations

An MoU with all organisations that are used for teaching or work placements must be in place

_____

STANDARD 7 INFORMATION RESOURCES

Standard	Standard is Met	Standard is not Met (Specify Major/Moderate/Minor Deficiency)
7.1 Adequate access to appropriate current information *via* print and electronic textbooks, journals and other information sources must be provided	✓	

Evidence Examined
• Application for Veterinary Nursing programme accreditation 2020 (section 6) • Library resources • Consultation with (library & lecturing) staff and students

Comments

Commendations
The Institute have invested in hard-copy books (5000 Euro) as well as electronic resources specific to the Veterinary Nursing programme over the last year. The library remains open for collecting / returning books, but the additional investment in e-books should prove beneficial in the current (remote learning) climate.

Recommendations

_____

Standard	Standard is Met	Standard is not Met (Specify Major/Moderate/Minor Deficiency)
7.2 The programme must equip students with the skills, including information retrieval and analysis, to become independent learners	✓	

Evidence Examined
• Programme document (appendix 6), incl. specific modules with content on research skills • Work placements (appendix 7)

Comments

Commendations

Recommendations

STANDARD 8 ADMISSIONS AND STUDENT SUPPORT

Standard	Standard is Met	Standard is not Met (Specify Major/Moderate/Minor Deficiency)
8.1 Admissions policies must be clearly articulated, including any provision for advanced entry/accreditation of prior learning, and must be transparent	✓	

Evidence Examined

Web-site and student handbook contain extensive information regarding access, incl. CAO information and links, mature entry, FETAC, HEAR and DARE access
Additional documentation provided – VCI presentation

Comments

Commendations

Recommendations

_____

Standard	Standard is Met	Standard is not Met (Specify Major/Moderate/Minor Deficiency)
8.2 Policies and procedures for student assessment, academic progression, and fitness to practice must be transparent and available to all students	✓	

Evidence Examined

- Programme document (appendix 6) incl. module descriptors
- Web-site (exams & results)
- Student Handbook
- Panel discussion with students

Comments

Assessmentsemester1_2020.doc document highlights Academic Council approval for changes to assessment practices due to Covid-19 and related guiding documents.

The peer mentoring system appears to be informal.

Commendations

Recommendations

Standard	Standard is Met	Standard is not Met (Specify Major/Moderate/Minor Deficiency)
8.3 Formal mechanisms should be established for liaison between student representatives and those responsible for management of the programme	✓	

Evidence Examined

- Module feedback questionnaires
- Programme year feedback questionnaires
- Clear involvement of students on Programme Boards with input on programme and related decisions (as evident from lecturer and student discussions)

Student committee feeds back to the program board

Comments

Commendations

Recommendations

_____

STANDARD 9 CURRICULUM

Standard	Standard is Met	Standard is not Met (Specify Major/Moderate/Minor Deficiency)
9.1 The curriculum should provide graduates with the skills and competencies to perform a wide variety of entry-level professional veterinary nursing roles, as articulated in the VCI Benchmarks and Competencies document.	✓	
Evidence Examined • Programme document (appendix 6) • Self-Assessment Report Form • Veterinary Nursing Programme Document • Veterinary Nursing Ancillary Information • Panel discussion with course team, employers & students		
Comments Learning Outcomes (LOs) of modules should be reviewed at the next programmatic review opportunity: Verbs used should match Bloom's taxonomy (e.g. avoid the use of 'demonstrate understanding' or 'demonstrate knowledge' and ensure verbs used are appropriate for the module level (QQI level 6/7/8) All VCI Benchmark Competencies are mapped to the learning outcomes of the individual modules and relevant assessment strategies.		
Commendations		
Recommendations		

_____

Standard	Standard is Met	Standard is not Met (Specify Major/Moderate/Minor Deficiency)
9.2 In addition to specific veterinary nursing technical skills and competences, graduates should demonstrate appropriate generic competences including professionalism, ethical behaviour, and readiness for continuing professional development	✓	

Evidence Examined
• Programme document (appendix 6), module descriptors and Learning Outcomes highlight generic competencies and 'soft skills' • Self-Assessment Report Form • Veterinary Nursing Ancillary Information • Panel discussion with course team

Comments
Opportunities for students to develop 'soft skills' are interspersed throughout the programme. Ethical awareness and professionalism forms part of several modules as well as being part of a more specific 'stand-alone' module.

Commendations

Recommendations

STANDARD 10 ASSESSMENT

Standard	Standard is Met	Standard is not Met (Specify Major/Moderate/Minor Deficiency)
10.1 Assessment criteria, and required standards for progression, must be clearly articulated	✓	

Evidence Examined
- Programme document (appendix 6)   - Self-Assessment Report Form – Section 10   - Panel discussion with the course team   - Veterinary Nursing Programme Document   - Veterinary Nursing Ancillary Information   - Examination papers

Comments

Commendations
Minimum pass mark of 25% for assessment elements and minimum module pass mark of 40% reduce the potential of students passing modules on the basis of limited areas of knowledge / ability

Recommendations

Standard	Standard is Met	Standard is not Met (Specify Major/Moderate/Minor Deficiency)
10.2 Direct evidence must be provided on how students' competence in practical skills is objectively assessed	X	moderate deficiency

Evidence Examined

- Self-Assessment Report Form – Section 10
- Panel discussion with the curse team
- Veterinary Nursing Programme Document
- Veterinary Nursing Ancillary Information
- OSCE Manual and supporting information

Comments

The OSCE forms the summative assessment for the Professional Practice Skills module and consists of eight six-minute tasks. The manual provided contains assessment scenarios and individual methodologies along with equipment lists, examiner instructions and calculation formulae. The team indicated that the individual OSCE stations are developed by the module leaders. There are two members of academic staff responsible for creating the examination and agreeing the pass mark. It would not be possible to re-create this examination consistently without written policies and procedures.

Commendations

Recommendations

Develop written policies and procedures in relation to the development and administration of the OSCE which includes:
- Design of the examination
- Staffing - Roles and responsibilities of all involved
- Students – Eligibility, availability of mock examinations, student briefing information, mechanisms for feedback, timetable
- Development and quality assurance of new tasks
- Blueprinting
- Quality assurance of the OSCE
- Evidence based standard setting

Standard	Standard is Met	Standard is not Met (Specify Major/Moderate/ Minor Deficiency)
10.3 Appropriate procedures for quality assurance of assessment and grading must be implemented	X	minor deficiency

Evidence Examined

Comments
External Examiners provide independent and impartial quality assurance of the programme and their responsibilities. The Programme Board ensures appropriate use of assessment methodologies and monitors consistency across modules, recommending measures to address issues where necessary. The Programme Board also, periodically, review the extent to which the assessment methods are effective in addressing the learning outcomes.

Commendations

Recommendations
-    Internal review of all assessment methodologies should be in place prior to external scrutiny.

Standard	Standard is Met	Standard is not Met (Specify Major/Moderate/Minor Deficiency)
10.4 Procedures for timely remediation, and of appeal, of assessment outcomes must be available	✓	

Evidence Examined

- Web-site has detailed information on process for appeals (incl. timelines)

Comments

There is a detailed appeals-process in place, which includes information and timelines regarding review or recheck of results.

Commendations

Recommendations

_____

VISITATION REPORT SUMMARY

Actions by institution:

Recommendations:	
Standard	**Recommendation:**
3.1	Develop and implement a mission statement specific for the veterinary nursing programme
4.4	Training and standardisation for work placement supervisors should be developed and implemented
5.4	The institute should undertake and implement a risk assessment for all animals used in the practical teaching for veterinary nursing to ensure animal welfare
6.1	Adequate training in animal handling of live dogs & cats should be completed before going out on the first placement
6.2	An MoU with all organisations that are used for teaching or work placements must be in place
10.2	Written policies and procedures in relation to the development and administration of the OSCE should be developed to include standard setting
10.3	Internal review of all assessment methodologies should be in place prior to external scrutiny

Recommendations _must_ be addressed to the satisfaction of the Veterinary Council for Ireland before accreditation can be confirmed. Re-accreditation programmes must address conditions within the timescales agreed, or as stipulated by the VCI

Date for response by institution	
A response to the recommendations set out above, with a detailed action plan for resolution, is required by: Date:	
All conditions must be satisfactorily addressed by: Date:	

Accreditation or re-accreditation recommendation to the Veterinary Council for Ireland

Name of programme(s)	Accreditation category						Period of Accreditation	
	Full		Conditional		Provisional		Period (years)	

Signatures				
Chairman of visitation Panel:			Date:	2 december 2020
Please print name:	Bertil Douw D.V.M.			

		Date:	
Signature of Principal or Chief Executive			
Please print name:			

VETERINARY COUNCIL OF IRELAND

On receipt of this document, the Course Provided must complete and return to the accreditation panel within 12 weeks

To Be Completed By the Accreditation Panel			To be completed by the Course Provider	To be completed by the Course Provider	To be completed by The Accreditation Panel	To be completed by TheAccreditation Panel in Consultation with the Course Provider		
Standard	Non Compliance Category (Minor/Moderate /Major)	Detail of Non Compliance Requiring Corrective Action	Proposed Corrective Action	Proposed Completion Date	Assessment of proposed action and timeframe	Update (to be provided by **the Course Provider** to VCI at end of proposed completion date)	Status	
							Open	Closed (include date closed out)
3.1	minor	Develop and implement a mission statement specific for the veterinary nursing programme						
4.4	minor	Training and standardisation for work placement supervisors should be developed and implemented						
5.4	minor	The institute should undertake and implement a risk assessment for all animals used in the practical teaching for veterinary nursing to ensure animal welfare						
6.1	minor	Adequate training in animal handling of live dogs & cats should be completed before going out on the first placement						
6.2	minor	An MoU with all organisations that are used for teaching or work placements must be in place						
10.2	moderate	Written policies and procedures in relation to the development and administration of the OSCE should be developed to include standard setting						
10.3	minor	Internal review of all assessment methodologies should be in place prior to external scrutiny						