



# **Veterinary Council of Ireland**

## **Consultation on accreditation standards for programmes of education in Veterinary Medicine**

**2025**

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### **Background:**

As the statutory regulator for veterinary medicine and veterinary nursing in Ireland, the Veterinary Council ('the Council') is entrusted in law as the competent authority for the accreditation of programmes of veterinary medicine and veterinary nursing in Ireland. Graduates of such Veterinary Council accredited programmes are eligible to join the Register of Veterinary Practitioners and Veterinary Nursing in Ireland. It is 5 years since our last review of accreditation standards for programmes of undergraduate education. We welcome feedback on the draft standards of accreditation from stakeholders in our periodic review.

Accreditation standards ensure professionalism in the practice of veterinary medicine and veterinary nursing in Ireland, to the benefit of animal health and welfare, public health, and food safety in the public interest. In anticipation of growth in veterinary education, and the prospect of new education providers, programmes, and delivery models, the Council is reviewing its current standards for accreditation to ensure these reflect best practice and align with the One Health approach, recognising the important interconnectivity between animal, human and environmental health. The Council considers stakeholder input essential to ensure VCI standards meet evolving professional needs and societal expectations of the veterinary professions.

### **Key themes:**

One of the main objectives in reviewing the Veterinary Medicine and Veterinary Nursing Accreditation Standards is to support development of a rigorous, student-centered, approach to delivery of education, with greater emphasis on the role of clinical training in instilling the necessary competencies.

Proposed key changes include:

- Additional requirements in relation to course providers to ensure students receive adequate exposure across animal types, with defined requirements for student clinical and practical experience and a stronger emphasis on case variety.
- In addition to reinforcing existing standards around mental health, wellbeing, professional skills and ethics, standards have been expanded to include emerging topics such as Artificial Intelligence, research and self-learning.
- VCI draft Veterinary Medicine accreditation standards propose to continue adoption of European Association of Establishment of Veterinary Education (EAEVE) standards, with additional standards and Day One Competencies for the Irish context. VCI proposes to include additional competencies including: the Role of the Veterinary Nurse; Clinical Governance & Evidence-Based Practice; Research & Integrity; and Veterinary Medicines legislation.

### **How to share feedback:**

Consultation on the revised standards runs from **1 July to 11 September 2025**. The Council welcomes written submissions to [info@vci.ie](mailto:info@vci.ie) from any party on the proposed revised accreditation standards for programmes of veterinary medicine and veterinary nursing.

All feedback and submissions received as part of this public consultation will be collated and used to inform further revisions for these revised standards of accreditation.

## Accreditation Standards for Veterinary Medicine

Following a detailed mapping (available [here](#) and [here](#)) of common themes across the major international accrediting bodies - including European Association of Establishment for Veterinary Education ([EAEVE](#)), the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons ([RCVS](#)), the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC) and the American Medical Association ([AVMA](#)) - the 2025 VCI Draft Accreditation Standards have adopted those laid out in the European System of Evaluation for Veterinary Training (ESEVT) operated by the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education ([EAEVE](#)), taking them as the foundation for our standards. In addition, the VCI in its review of accreditation standards and Day One Competencies extends the EAEVE standards in the form of an addendum which takes into account the particular needs of veterinary education in the Irish context. [Link: Draft 2025 VCI Addendum to ESEVT Accreditation Standards for Veterinary Medicine](#)

The tables below give a brief description of key updates made by VCI in its latest review to its addendum, extending the VCI requirements which will apply in addition to those of EAEVE:

Framework Area	Key updates to VCI Standards for Veterinary Medicine 2025
<b>Addendum 1. Elective Practical Training</b>	Added emphasis on real-world settings as the norm for clinical practice. Emphasis on the need for flexibility in the nature and content of practical training to address varying needs of students.
<b>Addendum 2. Facilities, Equipment and Clinical Resources</b>	Specific inclusion of zoos and research environments as acceptable clinical settings. Updated requirements relating to student engagement and data privacy. Increased emphasis on the role of the veterinary nurse as part of multidisciplinary teams in practices.
<b>Addendum 3. Supports for Resilience, Mental Health and Wellbeing</b>	Added requirement for visible and accessible mental health services. Enhanced requirements around integrating wellbeing across the curriculum.
<b>Addendum 4. Business Management Studies</b>	Clearer statement of requirement to support diverse career paths (e.g. self-employed, business owner, employee). Emphasises need for early and ongoing training in Business Management throughout the programme.
<b>Addendum 5. Communication and Professionalism</b>	Added Motivational Interviewing (MI) as a required skill. Further defines objectives in Communication training: Patient safety, complaint prevention, and optimising care. Clearer focus on how Veterinary Education Establishments demonstrate teaching of these skills.

## Day One Competencies for Veterinary Medicine

1. Act in a way that shows understanding of the ethical and legal framework within which veterinarians should work, including professional-, animal welfare-, client-, public health-, societal and environmental-related aspects.
  - Graduates must demonstrate familiarity with, and a clear understanding of, the binding nature of compliance with the Veterinary Council of Ireland Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Practitioners.
  - Graduates should be familiar with the relevant veterinary medicine legislation, both Irish and European, competent to navigate authorised veterinary medicines, online medicines data sheet and SPC's, reporting of adverse reactions and the cascade guide for prescribing veterinary medicines.
2. Understand scientific research methods, the contribution of basic and applied research to science and implementation of the 3Rs principle (Replacement, Reduction, Refinement).
  - Graduates must understand the contribution of basic and applied research to veterinary science, demonstrating proficiency in research methods and adherence to the principles of research integrity.
  - Additionally, graduates must have knowledge of and recognise the valuable contribution of animals in research environments to the development of medicines and medical devices for both human and animal use, and understand the implementation of the 3Rs (Replacement, Reduction, Refinement) in relation to the use of animals in research.
3. Demonstrate a basic knowledge of the organisation, management and legislation related to veterinary practice. Understand the economic and emotional context in which the veterinarian operates.
4. Promote, monitor and contribute to maintaining health and safety of oneself, patients, clients, colleagues and the environment in the veterinary setting; demonstrate knowledge about the principles of quality assurance; apply principles of risk management in practice.
5. Communicate effectively with clients, the public, professional colleagues and responsible authorities, using language appropriate to the audience concerned and in full respect of confidentiality and privacy.
6. Implement principles of effective interpersonal interaction, including communication, leadership, management, team working, mutual respect and other soft skills.
7. Prepare accurate clinical and client records, and case reports when necessary, in a form satisfactory to the relevant audiences.
8. Work effectively as a member of a multidisciplinary team in the delivery of services and recognise the contribution of all team members. Graduates must demonstrate familiarity with, and a clear understanding of, the role and scope of the Veterinary Nurse.
9. Be able to review and evaluate literature and presentations critically.
10. Understand and apply principles of One Health to ensure veterinary Good Clinical Practice, and research-based and evidence-based veterinary medicine.
  - Graduates must demonstrate a comprehensive understanding and application of clinical governance principles, as defined by the Veterinary Council of Ireland in the Code of Professional Conduct, including reflection, analysis, and improvement in professional practice for the benefit of animal patients and clients. Understanding must encompass animal safety, clinical effectiveness, positive animal and client experience.
  - Graduates must be proficient in practising evidence-based veterinary medicine.
11. Demonstrate ability to critically analyse evidence, cope with incomplete information, deal with contingencies, and adapt knowledge and skills to varied scenarios and contexts.
12. Use of professional capabilities to contribute to the advancement of veterinary knowledge and the One Health concept, in order to promote the health, safety and welfare of animals, people and the environment, as well as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.
13. Demonstrate the ability to recognise personal and professional limits, and know how to seek professional advice, assistance and support when necessary.
14. Demonstrate a commitment to lifelong learning and to professional development. This includes recording and reflecting on professional experience and taking measures to improve performance and competence.
15. Engage in self-audit and peer-group review processes on a regular basis in order to improve performance.
16. Obtain an accurate and relevant history of the individual animal or animal group, and its/their husbandry and environment.
17. Handle and restrain animal patients safely and with respect of the animal and instruct others in helping the veterinarian to perform these techniques.
18. Perform a complete clinical examination and demonstrate ability in clinical decision-making.

19. Develop appropriate treatment plans and administer treatment in the interest of the animal under their care with regard to the resources available and to appropriate public health and environmental considerations.
20. Attend in an emergency and perform first aid in common animal species\*. Prioritise situational urgency and allocate resources accordingly.
21. Assess the physical condition, welfare and nutritional status of an animal or group of animals and advise the client on principles of husbandry, feeding, reproduction, production, welfare, individual health, herd health and public health.
22. Collect, preserve and transport samples, select appropriate diagnostic tests, interpret and understand the limitations of the test results.
23. Communicate clearly and collaborate with referral and diagnostic services, including providing an appropriate history.
24. Use basic diagnostic equipment and carry out an examination effectively as appropriate to the case, in accordance with good health and safety practice and current regulations. Understand the contribution of digital tools and artificial intelligence in veterinary medicine.
25. Recognise signs of possible notifiable, reportable and zoonotic diseases as well as abuse of animals and take appropriate action, including notifying the relevant authorities.
26. Access the appropriate sources of data on information and legislation relating to animal care and welfare, animal movement, notifiable and reportable diseases, use of medicines, including responsible use of antimicrobials.
27. Prescribe and dispense medicines correctly and responsibly in accordance with legislation and latest guidance.
28. Report suspected adverse reactions through the appropriate channel.
29. Recommend and evaluate protocols for biosecurity, and apply these principles correctly.
30. Perform aseptic procedures appropriately.
31. Safely perform sedation and general and regional anaesthesia; implement chemical methods of restraint.
32. Prevent, assess and manage pain.
33. Recognise when euthanasia is appropriate and perform it with respect of the animal and its owners, using an appropriate method, with due regard to the safety of those present; advise on ethical and legal disposal of the carcass.
34. Perform necropsy in all common animal species, including sampling, dispatching and reporting.
35. Perform ante-mortem inspection of food-producing animals including paying attention to welfare aspects, systematic gross post-mortem examination, record observations, sample tissues, store and transport them.
36. Perform inspection of food and feed to correctly identify conditions affecting the quality and safety of products of animal origin, including related food technology.
37. Protect public health by identifying conditions that are directly or indirectly related to animals, their products and by-products, when they contribute to the protection, conservation and improvement of human health.
38. Advise on and implement preventive and eradication programmes appropriate to the disease and species, in line with accepted animal health, animal welfare, public health and environmental health standards.
  - Graduates should be competent to critically assess the benefit, risks and limitations of artificial intelligence and emerging technologies, to maintain a standard of care, within ethical and legal parameters, in the interests of animal health and welfare.