



Accreditation policies and procedures

Of the

**Accreditation Committee of Veterinary Nurse
Education (ACOVENE)®**

Fourth edition, November 2023

Updated February 2026

ACOVENE

Secretariat:

C/o RCVS

London

UK

acovene@rcvs.org.uk

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4th edition 2023

Updated February 2026

Review Panel 2023:

- Krista Arnold Dr. Med. Vet. MRCVS (Chair), UK
- Marije Colmans DVM, The Netherlands
- Nienke Dijkerman DVM, The Netherlands
- Andreja Jeffery Ed.D, MSc, FHEA, DipAVN (Surg), Cert Ed, RVN, UK
- Prof. Zoe Polizopoulou, EBVS® European Specialist in Veterinary Clinical Pathology, Greece
- Sarah Privitera VN, Italy

The 4th edition of Accreditation policies and procedures of ACOVENE were approved by the ACOVENE board on 24/11/2023. The document was updated in March 2026 with amendments to the accreditation classification and appeals policy.

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Accreditation of European veterinary nurse programmes by ACOVENE is conducted under the supervision of the Federation of Companion Animal Veterinary Associations (FECVA) and the Veterinary European Transnational Network for Nursing Education and Training (Vetnnet)

ACOVENE was established in 2007 through the DASVENT Transfer of Innovation project, funded with support from the European Commission.



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About ACOVENE

The Role of ACOVENE

- I.1 ACOVENE accredits veterinary nurse education programmes in Europe. The key stakeholders in veterinary nursing i.e. veterinary practitioners, practising veterinary nurses and educators are all represented within the organisation. All accredited programmes must meet the Standards of Accreditation set by ACOVENE to ensure quality of educational experience and the assessment of student knowledge and skills.

ACOVENE's objectives

- I.2 ACOVENE's objectives are to
- a. Accredit veterinary nurse programmes.
 - b. Assist in the development and improvement of veterinary nurse programmes and qualifications.
 - c. Work in collaboration with national boards and regulatory agencies where appropriate.
- I.3 ACOVENE encourages veterinarians to engage veterinary nurses and to promote the economic value and the advantages of effective veterinary nursing in the delivery of quality veterinary care. Cooperation and affiliation between veterinary nursing programmes and veterinary schools is encouraged.
- I.4 The Board recognises, and works with, national and European veterinary and veterinary nursing representative and regulatory organisations, including Vetnet as the European organisation representing veterinary nurse educators.

Initial veterinary nurse education

- I.5 Individuals contemplating a career in veterinary nursing are encouraged to attend an ACOVENE-accredited programme where instruction is conducted in facilities and clinical settings that meet quality standards providing exposure to the care and treatment of animal patients.
- I.6 Programmes may be offered at a variety of levels, for example vocational education or undergraduate provision, and may be delivered via attended courses or distance learning, or a combination of modes.
- I.7 An institution offering programmes on multiple sites may be required to make separate applications and/or be subject to additional site visits.

Continuing education

- I.8 ACOVENE encourages the development of additional educational and career advancement opportunities for veterinary nurses. Schools are encouraged to partner with national and local groups to provide these opportunities.

Accreditation

- I.9 The accreditation of European programmes in veterinary nursing is based on the provisions

outlined in this document “*Accreditation Policies and Procedures*” as authorised by ACOVENE on 24th November 2023. The education, development, and accreditation procedures are to be determined and administered by ACOVENE. The *Accreditation Policies and Procedures of ACOVENE* is also available from the ACOVENE secretariat – acovene@rcvs.org.uk.

Professional regulation of veterinary nurses

- I.10 National veterinary practice legislation provides for limitations on veterinary activities performed by non-veterinarians. Where veterinary nurses are subject to national regulatory requirements, standards for education and training are stipulated by the national regulator. Where applicable, ACOVENE requires accredited schools to meet the standards set by their national regulator.

ACOVENE policy on veterinary nursing in Europe

Preamble

- II.1 The European Accreditation Committee of Veterinary Nurse Education (ACOVENE) recognises the value of veterinary nurses as an integral component of the veterinary team and urges full utilisation of veterinary nurses. Veterinary practice is enhanced through efficient team working and the delegation of tasks and responsibilities to appropriately trained support staff.

Terminology

- II.2 Veterinary nursing is the science and art of providing skilled professional supportive care to animals and professional technical support to veterinarians. ACOVENE accredits programmes in veterinary nursing that graduate veterinary nurses.
- II.3 A veterinary nurse (in a European context) is a graduate from a recognised programme and / or holds a qualification that is recognised by the relevant national veterinary regulatory authority. In most cases the graduate is granted a diploma or certificate. Each European country has its own nomenclature for a veterinary nurse, further defined by each country.
- II.4 ACOVENE encourages schools, organisations, and regulatory authorities to use the standard terminology described above, but will not preclude other national or local terminology so long as the programme concerned clearly produces veterinary nursing graduates.

The Role of Veterinary Nurses

- II.5 The veterinary nurse's role is to provide supportive professional health care in conjunction with veterinarians.
- II.6 The duties of veterinary nurses are performed under the direction, supervision, and responsibility of veterinarians. These duties are accomplished in compliance with European and national laws and do not include diagnosing, prescribing, or performing surgery except where explicitly permitted by regulation.
- II.7 Veterinary nursing programmes must lead to competences as described in the ACOVENE Dossier of European Competences for the Veterinary Nurse.

The Accreditation Board

The Board

- III.1 ACOVENE Board members are appointed by the ACOVENE Board. Terms are unlimited and performance is regularly reviewed. Board meetings are held at least once a year.
- III.2 The Board membership represents veterinary nurses, veterinary practitioners, veterinary nurse educators and accreditation bodies.

Reports

- III.3 The accreditation status of programmes will be published on the ACOVENE website and other appropriate channels.

Confidentiality

- III.4 All information related to ACOVENE accreditation of a veterinary nurse programme is strictly confidential. This includes, but is not limited to, reports of evaluation, letters, self-evaluation and accreditation materials, interim/annual/biennial reports, correspondence, and the content of any discussion related to the programme and/or its accreditation. Such information shall not be disclosed to third parties without the prior written consent of the institution concerned, except:
- where disclosure is required by applicable law, regulation, or court order; or
 - where information is requested by a competent authority acting within its legal mandate.

Requests for information related to a specific institution and/or programme must be referred to ACOVENE, or to the respective institution.

- III.5 Where disclosure is requested by a competent authority but is not legally mandatory, the institution concerned shall be informed without delay and may object in writing to such disclosure within a reasonable timeframe specified by ACOVENE. In the absence of a legal obligation to disclose, ACOVENE shall respect a duly substantiated refusal by the institution.

All other requests for information related to a specific institution and/or programme must be referred to ACOVENE or to the respective institution.

- III.6 ACOVENE may require that certain benchmark data about programmes be published. Most of the data cannot be identified with a particular school. It is helpful to schools seeking to become accredited, as well as schools already accredited, to be able to compare their statistics to the averages and ranges of schools accredited by ACOVENE.

Statement on integrity

- III.7 To foster ongoing confidence in the specialised accreditation process, both the veterinary nursing school and ACOVENE must be assured that respective roles and functions are clearly understood. The following are some of the areas where special

efforts must be made to assure integrity of the process:

Veterinary Nursing Programme responsibilities:

a.	Information	The school must present accurate information to ACOVENE for accreditation evaluation and must allow access to all parts of the operation during the site visit.
b.	Students	The school must make every effort to protect students. Such protection must include, but is not limited to, unbiased grading procedures and access to educational opportunity, scholarships, and student services.
c.	Promotion	The school must refrain from misleading advertisement of the programme. If a school publishes information regarding the accreditation status of its program(s), the information must be correct.

Visitation Panel responsibilities:

a.	Objectivity	During the evaluation process, the Visitation Panel must evaluate the programme only against the Standards of Accreditation that have been approved by ACOVENE. Application of the Standards to all programmes must be unbiased.
b.	Communication	The Visitation Panel must inform all national, institution, and programme officials of matters related to accreditation in a timely manner.
c.	Diversity	The Visitation Panel must recognise national, institutional and programme diversity when making accreditation decisions.
d.	Ethical practice	All materials, discussions, and decisions of the Visitation Panel regarding accreditation must be confidential. The Visitation Panel must conform to the Board's Conflict of Interest Policy.

Accreditation standards and guidelines for interpretation

- IV.1 Accreditation is the voluntary process by which educational institutions are evaluated for quality, based on conformity with established standards. Standards represent the professional values, knowledge, skills and behaviours required of accredited Education Institutions (EI).
- IV.2 Animal health and welfare and public safety is central to our standards.
- IV.3 Accreditation serves to enhance the profession and to protect the public by identifying acceptable standards of education and assisting institutions in achieving these standards. The following minimum standards have been established by ACOVENE. Standards are identified under the following 11 headings:
1. Institutional Accreditation
 2. Financial integrity
 3. Organisation and communications
 4. Teaching and support staff
 5. Physical facilities and equipment
 6. Resources for clinical instruction
 7. Informational resources
 8. Admissions and management of students
 9. Curriculum and practical teaching
 10. Assessment strategies
 11. Programme evaluation
- IV.4 All accredited programmes must meet the Standards of Accreditation. In case an education institute believes that standard criteria would violate the laws of their country, please contact the ACOVENE secretariat (acovene@rcvs.org.uk) before sending the application for accreditation. These Standards are intended to assist programmes in preparing entry-level veterinary nurses. Standards allow flexibility in the design and implementation of a programme, while education institutes are accountable for the local delivery and the management of accredited programmes.
- IV.5 The Standards aim to develop VN students to reach their full potential. It is recognised that the Standards reflect an evolving process and are subject to periodic review and change.
- IV.6 The table below sets out the required Standards of Accreditation for a programme to be accredited by ACOVENE. A programme constitutes both the facilities, resources

and quality assurance provided by the applicant school (and its associated off-site facilities) along with the curriculum and associated assessment processes.

IV.7 The following definitions shall be used in applying the Standards:

- a. Must or shall: Indicates an imperative need, duty or requirement; an essential or indispensable item; mandatory.
- b. Should: Indicates the recommended way to attain the Standard; highly desirable
- c. May: Indicates freedom or liberty to follow a suggested alternative that may lead to improved educational practice.

IV.8 ACOVENE must be provided with suitable evidence to demonstrate that a programme meets each standard. In most cases this entails the provision of documentary evidence that can be verified during a site visit, along with observation of the facilities and interviews with staff and students.

IV.9 The “possible sources of evidence” column lists the ways in which a programme may be able to provide a visitation panel with evidence that it meets a standard. This list is intended to be a guide, and is not prescriptive or exhaustive; if a programme wishes to provide alternative evidence that it meets a standard it may do so, and should include this on the application form.

IV.10 Whilst some documentary evidence can be audited during the accreditation site visit, translated key documents and/or summaries of key documents in English must be provided with the application form/ self-evaluation report as stipulated. It is important that the visitation panel are in a position to prepare adequately for a site visit through reading key documentary evidence in advance.

IV.11 Schools are advised to consider the limited time and resources of a site visitation panel when deciding how to present supporting evidence. Whilst confidential documents, policies, procedures and meeting records can be verified during a site visit, there will be insufficient time to translate and audit large volumes of literature. Failure to submit sufficient translated evidence with the accreditation application may therefore result in the application of conditions (see page 41) or in a requirement for re-visitation.

The accreditation standards

a. Possible sources of evidence:

The term 'Possible sources of evidence' refers to the examples provided to illustrate how a school can demonstrate that it meets the required standard. It's important to note that not all of these suggested sources within a standard need to be provided. The school has the flexibility to select other sources if they find it more suitable or preferable. Sources can be used to show compliance with one standard or multiple standards.

b. Standard requirements:

Certain standard requirements may be repeated in multiple standards, as they are applicable to more than one standard.

c. Campus:

The term 'campus' is often used interchangeably with the terms 'school' or 'institute'.

No	Standard	Possible sources of evidence
1.	Institutional accreditation	
1.1.	An accredited veterinary nursing programme in Europe must normally be part of an institution accredited by the country of residence and/or the profession in that country of residence where such a system of professional accreditation exists. It must comply with all relevant legal, regulatory, professional and educational requirements and provide all information and evidence required by regulators within published timescales.	School prospectus Copy of accrediting agency and/or professional body inspection reports SOP (Standard Operating Procedures) documents
2.	Financial integrity	
2.1.	The programme must demonstrate adequate and sustainable financial support to attain its educational goals and support its mission.	Institution's annual report containing audited accounts Budgetary forecast for the accredited programme Evidence of actual and/or projected income

No	Standard	Possible sources of evidence
		sources Evidence of demand for the programme (the market) Marketing strategy for the programme Self assessment reports
3.	Organisation and communications	
3.1.	The programme must develop and follow a mission statement that clearly defines its aims and philosophy. General information of programme outcome is presented clearly.	Mission statement Programme outcomes Adequate placement provision/employment Module/unit documentation Lesson planning documentation Prospectus / website / social media Accessibility for students
3.2.	The structure of the whole organisation is clear and responsibilities are defined. The roles of programme personnel, and the lines of communication between the institution's management structure and the programme director, must be clearly defined.	Organisational chart Chart of organisation's board and/or committee structures Minutes of meetings Oral confirmation by staff
3.3.	Interactions with students, faculty staff, employers and the wider public must be conducted with integrity. Policies and educational services for veterinary nursing students should align with those offered to all students at the parent institution and be clearly defined.	Complaint procedure and policies Student guidance materials (student handbook) Records of student progress interviews Oral confirmation by students Privacy procedure and policies Procedure and policies for sharing confidential information (for example special counsellor for confident information)

No	Standard	Possible sources of evidence
		E-safety policy Consent form for example for photos and film Information of those policies/procedures on website or in brochures
3.4.	ACOVENE must be informed of major changes in - administration, - organisation, - association with the parent institution, - curriculum, - faculty, or - national objectives which could potentially jeopardize - programme delivery or - alter the programme's learning outcomes, or - modifications to assessment methods that might impact assessment results. Such major changes must be reported to ACOVENE within thirty days of implementation and must document how the programme will continue to comply with accreditation standards. ACOVENE recommends that schools contact ACOVENE when they are uncertain whether a change is considered major.	Communications with ACOVENE (relevant letters, action plans, annual reports)
3.5.	The programme must continually align with the dynamic changes and requirements of the work field. This necessitates regular and effective evaluation involving students, teaching staff, and employers. The evaluation process should be comprehensive, informing teaching practices, programme development, governance, and ongoing review to ensure the programme's ongoing relevance and effectiveness. Evidence must be provided that the quality assurance loops are fully closed (Plan Do Check Adjust cycles) to efficiently enhance the	Evaluation reports Minutes of programme team meetings Curriculum review records and feedback documents of teachers, students and stakeholders Communication of changes with relevant stakeholders Attrition rate

No	Standard	Possible sources of evidence
	quality of education. Any action planned or taken as a result of this must be communicated to all those concerned. Attrition rates of personnel must be recorded and monitored.	
3.6.	Wellbeing of people is prioritised. Education is fair, impartial and compliant with equalities and human right legislation. This includes but is not limited to - learning support and counselling services, - career advice, - provision for disabled students and - fair and transparent mechanisms for dealing with student illness, impairment and disability during the programme, There must be effective mechanisms for the resolution of student grievances (e.g. interpersonal conflict or harassment). <u>Support for mental health wellbeing is attainable for students and staff alike.</u> <u>Study interruption or speeding up is well monitored and registered. Opportunities are clear.</u>	Personnel and student recruitment policy Equality, diversity and inclusion policy documents Mental health support processes, policies and procedures Mental health - staff responsibilities and accessibility Programme content Agreements and organisation of study interruption or study acceleration Student registration modalities Complaints policy Grievance policy
4.	Teaching and support staff (this point relates to any personnel involved in the programme, regardless of the contractual status with the school).	
4.1.	Teaching and support staff numbers must be sufficient to deliver the educational programme and meet the instructional goals of the programme. Responsibilities and tasks of teaching and support staff are clear. The team of teachers has to be in balance	List of personnel (all teaching and support staff) CVs of teaching personnel Personnel Job descriptions detailing tasks and responsibilities Staff interview

No	Standard	Possible sources of evidence
	according to the curriculums need.	
4.2.	Each programme must have a minimum equivalent of one full-time licensed veterinarian or one full-time qualified veterinary nurse on staff. Programmes without a qualified veterinary nurse on their staff should actively work towards this level of staffing.	List of staff and their qualifications Job description and CV
4.3.	Teaching staff must have relevant experience and current knowledge in the topics they teach at a level appropriate to support the programme. Teaching staff must be able to promote the appropriate role of the veterinary nurse in veterinary practice. Teaching staff must have knowledge and continuous training in teaching methods. Faculty members should be participating members of national professional associations. Instructional duties must not violate national laws regarding the practice of veterinary medicine.	CVs of staff Relevant records of continuous professional development records of personnel Staff development plans Membership of platforms, intervention groups Student feedback Course reviews Annual success rates Membership of relevant national professional associations Attrition rate
4.4.	For programme development, qualified and experienced staff is available and stakeholders are involved. Veterinarians and / or veterinary nurses must be involved in the setting and assessment of the programme level intended learning outcomes.	Procedures for collaboration among support staff and teachers within development teams Feedback of stakeholders Minutes of programme team meetings Interviews with staff
4.5.	The programme director (or its equivalent) must have the competence, support and opportunity necessary to manage the programme successfully. This shall be documented in a written job description that also shall clearly define the position of the director within the institutional hierarchy. If the programme director is not part of the	Organisation structure Programme Director CV and job description Interview with Programme Director Minutes of meetings with teaching staff

No	Standard	Possible sources of evidence
	teaching team, e.g. no veterinary nurse or veterinarian, the way of support and cooperation should be made clear.	
4.6.	Teaching positions must offer sufficient compensation, incentives, and employment security to attract and retain qualified personnel in order to maintain programme stability. Teaching and support staff receive relevant induction and must have sufficient time for development and delivery of instruction, curriculum development, student evaluation, student advisement and counselling, and professional development.	Staff contracts Records of staff turnover Interviews with staff Staff rota Evidence of work load tool used to calculate workload
4.7.	The institution must provide evidence that it evaluates teaching staff regularly and assists and facilitates professional growth.	Personnel CVs Continuing professional development (CPD) policy Minutes of at least annual 1 to 1 interviews between superior and their personnel (annual appraisal) and resulting professional development plan of the individual. Staff interviews
4.8.	For off-campus clinical experiences, students and teachers should seek modern facilities that employ veterinary nurses who act as professional role models and mentors Responsibilities and roles are clear.	Criteria for approval of placement practices Memoranda of agreement Student interviews Memoranda of understanding Student feedback, Student programme handbook/ tasks
5.	Physical facilities and equipment	
5.1.	All aspects of the physical facilities both in the teaching establishment and off-site where teaching takes place must provide an environment conducive to learning and the achievement of the educational goals. Regularly review all learning environments and	Plan of teaching accommodation Site inspection by visitation panel Health and Safety inspection reports

No	Standard	Possible sources of evidence
	provide assurance that they are safe, effective and fit for purpose. Ensure that facilities and physical resources, including those used for clinical learning, comply with all relevant national regulation, including animal care and animal welfare standards.	
5.2.	Clinical teaching facilities must replicate modern veterinary facilities, Including standard laboratory and clinical equipment. This equipment should align with the list provided in the <i>Accreditation Application Form</i>.	Schedule of clinical resources and equipment Resources and equipment inspection by visitation panel
5.3.	Office space must be sufficient for the instructional and administrative needs of the faculty, staff, and programme. Facilities must be adequate for the tutorial and pastoral support of students.	Plan of teaching accommodation Site inspection by visitation panel Health and Safety inspection reports
5.4.	On-site and off-site animal housing must be consistent with accepted humane standards and national regulations.	Relevant inspection reports Site inspection by visitation panel
5.5.	Safety of students, programme personnel, and animals is a top priority. Veterinary nursing (VN) programmes and their parent institutions must establish policies to ensure a safe and healthy environment for everyone involved in VN education, in compliance with national legislation. Health and safety awareness must be integrated into the curriculum.	Relevant inspection reports Site inspection by visitation panel Health and Safety policy
5.6.	Materials such as drugs, biologics, and reagents used for demonstration purposes must be appropriately labelled, identified and stored. Compliance to current national regulations must be demonstrated.	Relevant inspection reports Site inspection by visitation panel

No	Standard	Possible sources of evidence
5.7.	Waste management shall be appropriate for the needs of the programme and consistent with national regulatory requirements.	Relevant inspection reports Contract with waste disposal company Site inspection by visitation panel
5.8.	Storage space and facilities must be sufficient for programme needs, safe, effective and fit for purpose.	Plan of teaching accommodation Site inspection by visitation panel Relevant inspection reports
6.	Resources for clinical instruction	
6.1.	Animals of various common species must be available for use in teaching. Adequate access to animals, either on-site, via clinical placements or through visits to off-site facilities, is required to provide the necessary quantity and quality of clinical instruction to meet the curriculum.	Site inspection by visitation panel List of available clinical placements Oral confirmation by students
6.2.	Programmes must follow all applicable national regulations and guidelines for the transportation, care and use of animals utilised by the programme. ACOVENE endorses the principles of humane care and use of animals as stated in European legislation. Animals used in the course of instruction must be treated well at all times Promote client, public and animal safety and welfare and maintaining confidentiality.	Animal care protocols and records Relevant inspection reports Site inspection by visitation panel Client Consent forms Staff and student interview
6.3.	Alternative teaching methods, such as simulations using suitable models, should be employed for the initial training of students in procedures that may inflict discomfort on animals (e.g., parenteral injections, lavage dosing, and bladder catheterisation). Utilising models and other innovative teaching	Clinical demonstration equipment Clinical skills laboratory Simulation models

No	Standard	Possible sources of evidence
	techniques should be explored to ensure both safety and efficacy, while still meeting the curriculum's goals and standards.	
6.4.	Off-campus providers such as veterinary practices may be used to meet some or all of an accredited programme's requirements for clinical instruction. They must meet objective requirements set by the programme concerning physical facilities, staff, available equipment, and have clearly defined and appropriate educational goals, along with the necessary resources and structure for off-campus clinical instruction. A memorandum of understanding or contractual arrangement must be established with all off-campus sites including, but not limited to, externship, preceptor ship, and distance learning sites. Off-campus instructors must be identified. A licensed veterinarian or a qualified, and where nationally appropriate, registered veterinary nurse must supervise the instruction. Provisions must be in place for monitoring student progress. Student support services from the programme provider must be available for students while undertaking off-campus instruction/ experience. Student knowledge and / or skills must be evaluated at the completion of each course by teaching staff employed by the parent institution and / or by other recognised authorities. Special emphasis must be placed on outcomes assessment to ensure that students achieve the established educational objectives. Student liability must be formally addressed by the parent institution and a policy implemented where required by national law.	Criteria for approval of off-site facilities Memoranda of agreement Policy/procedures for monitoring off-site facilities Inspection/monitoring /visitation reports of off site facilities. Communication with off-site facilities Interview with staff responsible for monitoring off-site facilities Interview with off site personnel involved in teaching of veterinary nurses Site inspection by visitation panel
7.	Information resources	

No	Standard	Possible sources of evidence
7.1.	Libraries and/or information retrieval are essential to veterinary nurse education and continuing education. Ideally students and staff should have access to a qualified librarian. In institutions where this is not possible, one staff member should be sufficiently qualified to managing and organising library resources, assist and support students and staff with library use and information retrieval. Timely access to current information resources through print, electronic media, and/or other means must be available to students, faculty, and staff. Teaching facilities should have sufficient and adequate quiet space available for students to read and study in private.	Library/ Quiet room opening hours Librarian (or alternative) CV and hours of work Interviews with staff, students and librarian/ or alternative Inspection of library, quiet study space and IT facilities Evidence of student access to information resources, like a list of journals, books, subscriptions etc. that are relevant for veterinary nurses
7.2.	Information resources must be adequate to meet the requirements of the curriculum and sufficient to service the student numbers. Content should be subject to regular review by the programme team.	Library/ Quiet room book and/or resource content list Information resource review policy Inspection of library/ quiet room and IT facilities
7.3.	Development of information retrieval skills must be demonstrated within the programme. Students must learn to reflect on information and resources to check the reliability of the information.	Curriculum Teaching and learning methodologies Interviews with students
8.	Admissions and management of students	
8.1.	The institution and programme admission policies, including any mechanisms for awarding credit for prior learning (APL) must be well defined and documented.	Admissions criteria APL evaluation policy and procedures APL modules
8.2.	The institution and programme must demonstrate integrity and responsibility, and	Admissions criteria Selection procedures

No	Standard	Possible sources of evidence
	provide equality of opportunity, in student recruitment and selection practices. Personnel who are knowledgeable about the programme and its requirements should conduct student recruitment. Nb: ACOVENE recognises that some institutions are obliged to use open admission policies that prohibit selective entry into veterinary nurse education programmes. However, the development and consistent application of selective admissions standards may be helpful in reducing attrition and producing graduates who are most likely to succeed, and therefore should be encouraged.	Interview records Student records Equality of opportunity policy
8.3.	Promotional publications must contain: - The institutional and programme aims and objectives - Admission requirements and procedures - Curriculum details - Level of qualification granted - Programme requirements for completion of the qualification, including the existence of any technical standards. This information must include: - The length of time necessary for completion - Policies with respect to satisfactory academic progress - Tuition fees and other programme costs - Refund policies - National requirements for eligibility for entry into the field of veterinary nursing.	School prospectus and website Student handbook Careers leaflets
8.4.	The number of students must be consistent with the mission of the programme and must not exceed the available resources or the number of faculty and support staff needed to meet the educational goals of the curriculum. The instructor to student ratio should be monitored and an appropriate instructor-to-student ratio must be maintained to ensure adequate delivery of instruction in a variety of	Indicators: - number of FTE teaching staff involved in VN training per number of undergraduate student - number of FTE teaching staff involved in VN training per number of students graduating annually - number of FTE support staff involved in VN training per number of students

No	Standard	Possible sources of evidence
	teaching environments.	graduating annually Indicators - FTE staff per student calculated for different teaching methods Number of dedicated programme tutors Interviews with students and staff
8.5.	Institutions should provide student support services for programme students to create a holistic and supportive environment for students to thrive in their academic and personal pursuits. Examples are: - Academic advising services - Tutoring - Career services - Disability services - Student organisations - Peer mentoring programmes. Interactions between students and faculty/staff must be of an adequate frequency and quality to accomplish several key objectives, including: - Communicating clear expectations for successful programme completion. - Providing constructive feedback for the improvement of skills or knowledge. - Encouraging and supporting professional growth and development Students receive personalised supervision based on their unique learning needs, proficiency, and confidence levels. This supervision includes tailored support and necessary adjustments, aligning with both equalities and human rights legislation and best practices in education. Some examples are: - Learning support and counselling services - Flexible learning options - Accessible learning materials, - Assessment modifications, - Mentorship programmes, - Cultural and diversity sensitivity, - Gender neutrality,	Arrangements for special educational support, academic support and pastoral support Records of student progress interviews Student meetings and interviews Complaints policy and procedure Grievance resolutions Whistle Blowing policy Social media policy Safeguarding policy Wellbeing policy Staff interviews

No	Standard	Possible sources of evidence
	The goal is to create an inclusive and equitable learning environment for all students. Student concerns or complaints are investigated and dealt with effectively, ensuring the wellbeing of people and animals is prioritised.	
8.6.	Throughout the curriculum, students must be exposed to veterinary team concepts and appropriate modelling of ethical and professional behaviour. Students are supported and supervised in being open and honest in accordance with the Codes of Professional Conduct where they exist. Ensure mistakes and incidents are fully investigated and learning reflections and actions are recorded and disseminated. The learning culture should embrace a non-blame culture.	Curriculum Clinical placement objectives Interviews with students Complaints policies Disciplinary procedure Accident recordings Clinical audit reports
8.7.	Students should be encouraged to participate in student organisations and be active in school activities. Students should be signposted to veterinary nursing organisations.	Interviews with students
9.	Curriculum and practical teaching	
9.1.	The programme must be designed, developed, evaluated and improved based on stake holder feedback (students, employers, staff). The curriculum must be delivered to a standard equivalent to at least EQF level 4 and must prepare graduates who will be fully capable of performing in a wide variety of professional roles within the veterinary nursing field. Evidence-based veterinary nursing must be part of the curriculum; It emphasises the use of the best available scientific evidence,	Curriculum Clinical placement objectives Programme assessment/ examination strategy Programme feedback from stakeholders (students, teachers, support staff, placement practices etc.)

No	Standard	Possible sources of evidence
	combined with clinical expertise and the individual animal's welfare and owner preferences, to guide nursing decisions and patient care in veterinary settings. At the completion of the curriculum, graduates must have achieved the entry-level skills needed to support veterinary practice. The curriculum shall provide a foundation in veterinary nursing that encourages students to continue life-long learning, self-reflection and professional behaviours.	
9.2.	Programmes shall include within their delivery: - Basic veterinary science - Communication - Critical thinking - Self- reflection - Decision-making - Clinical application skills - Professional Behaviour - Inter-professional learning - Supervision and leadership skills - professional collaboration and learning from members of the veterinary team Integration of nursing technical and medical skills within the curriculum must use live animals. Practical skills teaching must be included in programme provision. A dedicated practical teaching facility, providing a realistic and safe environment for the teaching and practice of a wide range of skills and clinical techniques should be provided. Demonstration and practical teaching equipment must reflect current veterinary nursing practice.	Curriculum Teaching and learning methodologies Tutor/ mentoring schemes Peer assessment Tour of facilities
9.3.	The curriculum should include general education (or sufficient entry level competences), along with specific veterinary nurse course content, including all of the ACOVENE competencies.	Curriculum Cross-reference table demonstrating articulation with the Dossier of European Competences for the Veterinary Nurse

No	Standard	Possible sources of evidence
	The veterinary nursing curriculum may be offered as a stand-alone course or be integrated into wider programmes of relevant study. Course objectives must be clearly communicated to students through syllabi or other course documents. Stand-alone veterinary nursing courses that meet the outcomes required by ACOVENE must be a minimum of two years (equivalent to 70 full-time weeks) duration. The curriculum must provide an appropriate structure and sequencing at increased level of complexity. <u>Veterinary nursing-specific curriculum:</u> The veterinary nursing programme curriculum must explicitly address the “<i>Dossier of European Competences for the Veterinary Nurse</i>” and remain relevant in respect of current VN practice. <u>Suggested general curriculum subjects:</u> The following are recommended general curriculum subjects: - Applied mathematics (integral part of syllabus) - Biological science - Communication skills (integral part of syllabus) - Fundamentals of chemistry - Foreign language ACOVENE recognises that a school may wish to emphasise certain areas within the curriculum to capitalise on regional variation, institutional strengths, and available job markets. This emphasis should be clearly stated in the mission statement/objectives of the programme, and the curriculum shall then reflect that emphasis. A choice to emphasise one aspect of the curriculum must not interfere with the acquisition of all competences listed in the	

No	Standard	Possible sources of evidence
	<i>"Dossier of European Competences for the Veterinary Nurse".</i>	
9.4.	Students must gain hands-on veterinary experience to learn and improve their skills. This is a mandatory part of the curriculum. Students on clinical placement must be able to maintain contact with the school. Suitably qualified staff must monitor students' personal and educational experiences during placements and review student performance. Clinical placement practices must also be able to maintain contact with the school. The school provides the clinical placement with information about the education level of the students (first year student versus exam student).	Records of contact with placement practice supervisors and students whilst on placement Students' practical assessment documents Student records Student interview
9.5.	A minimum of 500 hours of supervised practical experience in veterinary practice must be included in the programme. Records of student attendance at curriculum placements must be maintained. Programme placement assessments are facilitated and evidenced by observation and other appropriate assessment methods.	Curriculum Placement records Student interviews Observation records Student feedback records Skill recording tools
9.6.	The school must provide documentation of standard criteria for evaluating achievement of all veterinary nursing skills. These criteria must be consistent with standards that reflect contemporary veterinary practice. At least one summative assessment must be in the form of an Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) or similarly robust, objective and evidenced-based form of practical examination to test the safe and effective acquisition of a broad range of skills and competences outlined in the <i>"Dossier of Competences for Veterinary Nurses"</i>.	Students' practical assessment documents Student feedback Examination rules Examination Policy and procedure documents Examples of assessment material for each different assessment methodology Assessment strategy Examiner handbook Student handbook

No	Standard	Possible sources of evidence
9.7.	The school must provide documentation that all students have achieved all essential competences. (See “ <i>Dossier of European Competences for the Veterinary Nurse</i> ”, available from ACOVENE). There must be a robust and rigorous assessment strategy.	Students’ practical assessment documents Records of assessment Internal assessment quality assurance reports External examiner reports
10.	Assessment strategies	
10.1.	ACOVENE accreditation policies and procedures are based on assessment outcome. It is expected that the institution will encourage and support the programme review and evaluation process. A variety of programme-specific outcome assessment instruments that assist in determining attainment of the European Competences for the Veterinary Nurse must be employed. These must include examinations and the assessment of clinical practical skills.	Programme assessment strategy Tools or methods used to evaluate and measure the extent to which students have achieved the specific learning outcomes goals of the programme.
10.2.	All persons involved in examinations and assessments must be competent. The institution must clearly prescribe the necessary level and type of expertise and competence for individuals involved in the assessment process. The institution must provide suitable training to develop the expertise and competence of examiners/assessors.	List of personnel involved in setting, conducting and marking examinations Examiner/assessor CVs Examiner/assessor training and development policy Records of examiner training and development
10.3.	Assessment materials must reflect graduation requirements of the European Competences for the Veterinary Nurse. The relationship between graduation requirements and assessment activities / tasks must be clear. The type of assessment must be consistent	Programme assessment strategy Graduation criteria

No	Standard	Possible sources of evidence
	with the level of knowledge and competence as described in the graduation requirements.	
10.4.	Assessment methods and materials must be appropriately validated. All assessments must meet test-related quality requirements. The use of language must be clear and at the appropriate level. The kind of performance required must be obvious to students and examiners/assessors. Assessment materials must show the applicable grading structure and the pass mark required. The instructions for students and the examiner/assessor must be clear and complete. Assessment decisions must be valid and robust. Moderation if needed, is fair reliable and valid. Bias must be minimised.	Examples of assessment materials including model answers where applicable Guidance for markers Interview with assessors Moderation policies Assessment blueprints Marking schemes Test and item statistical analysis mechanisms Standard setting documentation Mechanisms to detect plagiarism Examiner standardisation processes
10.5.	The processes of assessment must be fair and transparent. The roles of participants in the process of examination must be clearly defined. Assessment processes include, but are not limited to, the ways in which: - Assessment methods and materials are constructed and approved. - Assessments will be conducted and students and their performance will be evaluated. - Results are processed, published and archived - Diplomas and certificates are delivered - Examination results are analysed - Students are, prior to the examination, informed about the form of the assessment, the evaluation, marking and reporting, and the access to the work done	Assessment quality procedures Procedures for certification Examination Board minutes External examiner reports

No	Standard	Possible sources of evidence
	- Exemptions are granted - Prior learning competencies are recognised. At least one summative assessment must be in the form of an Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) or similarly robust, objective and evidenced-based form of practical examination to test the safe and effective acquisition of a broad range of skills and competences outlined in the "Dossier of Competences for Veterinary Nurses".	
10.6.	Quality assurance regarding the processes of assessment must be in place. Consistency must exist between the procedures agreed and the procedures implemented. The procedures implemented must establish rigour and control. Assessment materials and processes of examination shall be evaluated and adjusted and records maintained of this process.	Assessment quality assurance procedures Examination Board minutes Interviews with examiners
10.7.	The school must have in place procedures, and associated committee structures, for the consideration of assessment outcomes and student appeals. Such procedures and committee structures should incorporate appropriate independent opinions i.e. an external examiner and / or an appeal officer.	Appeals procedure Records of recent appeals
10.8.	The school should involve veterinary and veterinary nursing practitioners in the development of assessments and materials.	Programme team meeting minutes
11.	Programme evaluation	
11.1.	The school must demonstrate an ongoing evaluation and evidenced-based improvement strategy for the education and veterinary nurse practice, based on Stakeholder (students, teaching staff and the employers of students/	Programme evaluation reports Visitation panel on-site interviews with students/staff

No	Standard	Possible sources of evidence
	veterinary practices providing clinical experience to students) feedback, at least once a year.	Quality of Standard meeting minutes Evidence of liaison with all Stakeholders (surveys, liaison meeting minutes) Action plans following stakeholder meetings Evidence of implementation of feedback Interview with Stakeholders
11.2.	Programme evaluations should be documented and fed into the school management structures. Evidence of the programme response to evaluation comments should be demonstrable.	Minutes of programme team meetings Responses to evaluation action plans Evidence of implementation of feedback
11.3.	The school should maintain contact with the programme market and ensure that the curricula remain relevant in respect to contemporary veterinary nursing practice.	Programme meeting minutes Graduate and employer surveys and liaison. Liaison with veterinary/veterinary nursing professional organisations External examiner report Stakeholder feedback
11.4.	The school/college should investigate the satisfaction of students and veterinary employers with assessment procedures and outcomes.	Programme evaluations Interviews with students

Classification of accreditation

V.1 Status classifications

Each school is evaluated on its entire educational programme, considering the stated objectives and the listed Standards. Classification of accreditation of a programme in veterinary nursing shall take effect from the last day of the site visit, as decided by ACOVENE. The accreditation status of each programme is published twice a year and can be provided on request.

- a. Full Accreditation - Those programmes that meet or exceed all Standards of Accreditation.
- b. Provisional Accreditation applies to:
 - New programmes that have not yet produced graduates or
 - New programmes that have received one or more outstanding major recommendations.

Duration:

A programme will remain on provisional accreditation until all major recommendations have been met, for a period not to exceed two years.

New programmes cannot apply for full accreditation until they have produced their first cohort of graduates.

Transition to Full Accreditation:

Once graduates have been produced and outcomes collected and analysed, a provisionally accredited programme may apply for full accreditation.

Special Site Visit:

If major changes occur in the programme that may affect its ability to meet the Standards, a special site visit may be required before an accreditation decision.

- c. Probationary Accreditation:
Applies to previously fully accredited programmes that no longer meet all Standards of Accreditation.

If a fully accredited programme receives one or more major recommendations, the ACOVENE Board will decide whether to:

- Maintain full accreditation for up to two years to allow the programme to resolve the major recommendations, or
- Place the programme on probationary accreditation.

All programmes, whether fully accredited or on probation, have up to two years to resolve major recommendations. Progress must be documented and evidenced annually in the SER.

If major recommendations are not resolved within the initial two-year period, the Board may:

- Place the programme on a final probationary period of up to 12 months, or

- Withdraw accreditation if progress is insufficient.

If major recommendations remain unresolved after the final probationary period, accreditation will be withdrawn.

Graduates of programmes on probationary accreditation are considered graduates of an ACOVENE-accredited programme in veterinary nursing.

d. Accreditation Withdrawn

Applies to previously accredited programmes whose accreditation has been withdrawn.

V.2 Notification of changes

Major changes in the programme must be reported to ACOVENE within thirty days of implementation. This report must document how the programme will continue to comply with the accreditation standards.

V.3 Re-application

Programmes with a status of withdrawn accreditation must submit a full application (and fee) for reaccreditation and undergo a site visit prior to restoration of accreditation.

V.4 Withdrawal of accreditation

A programme will have accreditation withdrawn if:

- A programme has been on probationary accreditation for two consecutive years with no significant progress to report.
- An institution is voluntarily closing its doors.

When accreditation is withdrawn:

The institutional president (or chief officer) and programme director are notified immediately in writing by ACOVENE of the accreditation status and the reasons for this.

ACOVENE will also notify the appropriate licensing agencies and veterinary medical associations of the actions taken.

The programme may file an appeal within 30 days of the notification, in accordance with the 'Procedure for Appeal of Adverse Decisions on Accreditation.'

If no appeal is filed, or once all appeal processes have been completed, the withdrawal of accreditation becomes final. At that point, the programme must comply with all requirements related to accreditation withdrawal:

- The school must provide an exit plan to safeguard its students.
- Depending on the nature of the unresolved conditions or major recommendation(s), students already enrolled may not receive ACOVENE accreditation, including, but not limited to, failure to provide required clinical hours, key teaching staff, core curriculum components, insufficient oversight of clinical or placement teaching, or deficiencies in exam administration.
- No new students may be enrolled under ACOVENE accreditation.

If a programme wishes to regain accreditation, the programme must:

- Submit a new application for accreditation no earlier than one year after the date of accreditation withdrawal.
- Pay all applicable fees.
- Provide sufficient resources to ensure completion of the education of currently enrolled students.
- Undergo a site visit to determine whether the programme is meeting the standards of accreditation outlined in this document.

ACOVENE will review the above requirements to determine whether accreditation may be reinstated.

V.5 Risk assessment

Schools are required to undergo annual risk assessments, which will form part of the annual Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and also be conducted at the time of programme re-evaluation or accreditation.

These assessments, based on accreditation status, progress on recommendations, and communication with ACOVENE, will be carried out by the reviewing panel and the Board to help identify and address potential problems at an earlier stage.

Standard operating procedure for accreditation of programmes

Fees and expenses

- VI.1 The ACOVENE accreditation of veterinary nursing programmes is voluntary. Expenses incurred for a site visit are the responsibility of the school.
- VI.2 The following fees are payable to ACOVENE.
- a. Initial or re-accreditation fee. This must be submitted no later than three calendar months prior to the accreditation site visit
 - b. Annual accreditation fee. This covers the costs of maintaining accreditation. Failure to pay the annual accreditation fee by the due date of the assessed calendar year may affect the accreditation status of the Programme.
 - c. All programmes are responsible for costs associated with conducting the site visit (for example expenses of the visitation panel).

Details of current accreditation fees are available from ACOVENE; fees are reviewed annually.

- VI.3 ACOVENE reserves the right to charge a cancellation fee, covering the expenses of the visitation panel, where a site visit is cancelled at short notice (normally less than 28 days), either at the instigation of the applicant school or where seriously late or inadequate documentation is provided. Should ACOVENE deem a site visit to be necessary outside of the planned re- accreditation or quality assurance cycle, additional fees will be payable.

Notification of intent

- VI.4 In order to facilitate the planning of the accreditation process and a site visit, applicant schools are required to submit a Notification of Intent to ACOVENE, using the appropriate form available from ACOVENE.

This must be received by ACOVENE at least six calendar months in advance of a required site visit.

ACOVENE offers a complimentary video consultation (typically 1.5–2 hours) with an ACOVENE accreditor to discuss the Notification of Intent and address any queries the institution may have before submitting an application.

- VI.5 The school must submit an application for initial accreditation or re-accreditation which includes a comprehensive self-evaluation report, using the forms available from ACOVENE. This must be submitted no later than three calendar months prior to the site visit and must be accompanied by the initial accreditation fee. ACOVENE will confirm receipt of application and work with the school to confirm a site visit date. Classes must be in session during the site visit evaluation.
- VI.6 The self-evaluation report must be submitted in English using the format available from ACOVENE. It must be submitted in electronic format to ACOVENE following the provided guidelines. If computer limitations prevent all appendices from being sent electronically, the programme must indicate which items have been omitted.
- VI.7 The self-evaluation report is reviewed by ACOVENE and the visitation panel members

for major deficiencies. They may ask for clarification and/or additional information. If no major deficiency is apparent, the site visit date is finalised and an agenda sent to the programme

Site visit

- VI.8 The visitation team consists of a minimum of two members assigned by ACOVENE. Panel members will be either veterinary nurses and/or veterinary surgeons who are appropriately registered in their country of work. At least one panel member will have an educational background. ACOVENE appoints the panel Chair.
- a. The school to be evaluated may comment on the membership of the visitation panel after it has been formed and reject site team members. Such rejection must take place early enough for a replacement to be found.
 - b. If a potential conflict of interest arises between any of the visitation panel members, ACOVENE and / or the school, it should be noted and appropriate actions taken.
- VI.9 The visitation panel will review the self-evaluation materials, and the Chairperson will invite comments from the other panel member(s) prior to the site visit. The Chairperson will also arrange a virtual meeting approximately 4–6 weeks before the visit to meet with the other panel member(s), discuss any questions or omissions in the application, identify any additional materials that may be required, and allocate areas of questioning during the site visit according to the panel members' areas of expertise.
- VI.10 The site visit evaluation is conducted in English. The site visit will be structured to include facilities where clinical and / or technical instruction is provided. The visitation panel will:
- a. Interview the programme director.
 - b. Inspect physical facilities, equipment, and library.
 - c. Interview faculty members and staff.
 - d. Review curriculum and course outlines using the European syllabus of competences as reference.
 - e. Interview students.
 - f. Consult privately to review findings.
 - g. Report findings to programme director.
 - a. Report findings to institutional senior management.
 - b. Prepare a written report of site visit.
- VI.11 After the site visit, immediate written or verbal feedback is provided to the programme director. A draft Report of Evaluation is written by the visitation panel

chairperson and distributed to the visitation team for review and appropriate changes if necessary.

Reporting and grant of accreditation

- VI.12 A revised Report of Evaluation will be submitted to the programme director of the institution for verification and a response to recommendations made during the site visit.
- VI.13 A final draft Report of Evaluation, site visit information and a copy of the institutions response to conditions and recommendations will be presented to ACOVENE at the earliest possible regular meeting. Reports from site visits conducted less than 60 days prior to an ACOVENE meeting may be deferred and considered at the next board meeting.
- VI.14 Information received subsequent to the evaluation (addenda, updates, etc.) will not be considered during the report to ACOVENE. The site visit is a “snap-shot” that verifies the condition of the programme at that time. Such information may be considered following the decision on accreditation status.
- VI.15 ACOVENE will determine the accreditation status of a programme based on a majority vote of the Board
- VI.16 ACOVENE will notify the programme director and chief executive officer of the institution of the programme’s assigned status and provide a final Report of Evaluation with conditions and/or recommendations for improvement. **Conditions, recommendations** and final reports of site visits are considered private communication between ACOVENE and the institution involved until the institution has been made aware of its accreditation status. After this a summary of the board’s findings may be published. Release of reports shall be at the discretion of the institution. ACOVENE may share visitation reports with competent authorities on request (please see III4 and III5 for further details).
- VI.17 ACOVENE staff will add the programme to its published list of accredited programmes after a 30-day period for potential appeals.
- VI.18 Reaccreditation takes place at five year intervals Major changes to an institution’s constitution or to a programme may also precipitate site visits, as may major concerns regarding the quality of a programme.

Subsequent Reporting and monitoring

- VI.19 Subsequent to receiving initial accreditation, programmes are required to submit annual self evaluation reports. Please refer to Appendix C for the annual interim report instructions.
- VI.20 ACOVENE will review the annual report at its next meeting and vote to continue or change the accreditation status based on the content of the report. Following review its decision will be reported to the programme director, chief executive office of the school..
- VI.21 ACOVENE reserves the right to lower the accreditation of a programme that, after

due notice, fails to submit an annual self-evaluation, or interim reports as requested. Subsequent accreditation will be considered only after submission of application for accreditation, self-evaluation and other accreditation materials, followed by a site visit to the programme. Based on the progress noted in an annual or biennial report, ACOVENE may request an appearance of a programme representative at its next regularly scheduled meeting. The cost for such an appearance will be borne by the respective programme / parent institution.

- VI.22 Major changes in the programme must be reported within thirty days of implementation. This report must document how the programme will continue to comply with the accreditation Standards.
- VI.23 Accreditation may be withdrawn from a programme that fails to provide a report of self- evaluation at least 45 days before a scheduled site visit, fails to provide an annual, biennial, or requested interim report by the published due date prior to the ACOVENE meeting at which the programme is to be reviewed, or fails to invite a site visit at the required time.
- VI.24 A programme for which accreditation has been withdrawn may apply for accreditation after one year by submitting a report of self-evaluation and other accreditation forms, requesting a site visit (see paragraph VI.27).

Initial accreditation and adverse accreditation decisions

- VI.25 Programmes granted less than full accreditation status shall be immediately notified of the actions required to achieve full accreditation. A programme that fails to meet the requirements for full accreditation after two consecutive years of provisional accreditation shall have its accreditation withdrawn. A programme may seek full accreditation following the graduation of its first cohort and the collection and analysis of outcomes data, at any time within the two-year provisional period. To do so, the programme must submit a self-evaluation and reaccreditation report demonstrating compliance with the recommendations associated with its current accreditation status. These recommendations are set out in the Report of Evaluation. Following receipt and review of the report, a further site visit by an evaluation panel may be required.
- VI.26 Programmes granted probationary accreditation must demonstrate and provide evidence of annual progress toward achieving full accreditation and must meet the requirements for full accreditation within a two-year period. Full accreditation may be sought at any time within this two-year period by submitting a self-evaluation and reaccreditation report, demonstrating compliance with the recommendations associated with the programme's current accreditation status. These recommendations are set out in the Report of Evaluation. Following receipt and review of the report, a site visit by an evaluation panel may be required.
- VI.27 Programmes have the right to appeal adverse accreditation decisions in accordance with the ACOVENE Procedure for Appeal of Adverse Decisions on Accreditation. ACOVENE will notify the appropriate credentialing bodies and the public within thirty days of any final adverse accreditation decision. A programme may reapply for accreditation no earlier than one year following the withdrawal of its accreditation. Further details are set out in the ACOVENE Procedure for Appeal of Adverse Decisions on Accreditation.

Communication of Accreditation Status

VI.28 Any reference by an institution or programme to ACOVENE accreditation may state the following: "[Identification of programme] is (provisionally, probationary or fully accredited) by ACOVENE as a programme of veterinary nurse education."

Interim site visits

VI.29 ACOVENE reserves the right to conduct a site monitoring visit at any time during the period of accreditation. Such visits will focus on evaluating the accredited programme including its resources and procedures in practice. No self-assessment report will be required; however, the visitation panel must be granted full access to students, teaching facilities, records and procedures during the visit. No fee shall be charged for routine site monitoring visits conducted for the purpose of ongoing quality monitoring.

Guidance for evaluation of veterinary nurse programmes by visitation panel members

- VII.1 Both in evaluating the accreditation information provided by the school and during the site visit, evaluators should attempt to determine how closely the programme conforms to the Standards of Accreditation. The task of the evaluators is to obtain first-hand information that will assist in reaching a decision on the most appropriate classification for the programme, based on previously established criteria.
- VII.2 ACOVENE encourages innovation and experimentation in curriculum design and teaching. Evaluators should be concerned with the success of the programme in producing competent nurses.
- VII.3 ACOVENE considers it important that veterinary nurse students be educated according to evidence based practice as skilled allied health professionals within the veterinary team.
- VII.4 Evaluators should take note of strengths as well as weaknesses of the programmes and should adopt the role of helpful colleagues rather than critics. The entire accreditation procedure should be oriented to assisting the programmes to meet the established criteria. Institutions who apply for accreditation should demonstrate a willingness to move towards best practice.
- VII.5 In addition to recommendations required for accreditation (Conditions and Major Recommendations), advancement of accreditation status, or continued accreditation, evaluation reports may include other recommendations (Minor Recommendations) intended as helpful suggestions for the improvement of the programme concerned.
- VII.6 Evaluators should listen to representatives of the programme. Comparisons with other programmes are not appropriate.
- VII.7 Each condition or recommendation listed at the end of an evaluation report must be supported by factual observations documented in the body of the report.
- VII.8 Information received after the conclusion of the site visit may not be included in the evaluation report. The site visit is considered a “snap-shot” that verifies the condition of the programme at that point in time. Updates or addenda will be considered only after ACOVENE has assigned the appropriate accreditation classification based on the site visit.
- VII.9 An evaluation report form is provided as a guide for site visit evaluations and to assist in producing consistent evaluation reports. It is not intended to limit the scope of the investigation or the report.
- VII.10 ACOVENE shall make the accreditation decision for the programme based on the recommendations of the evaluators.
- VII.11 Information obtained from ACOVENE reports or during site visits is confidential and not to be discussed outside ACOVENE. Reports of programme evaluations are sent only to the appropriate persons named by the educational institute. It is at the discretion of the programme and the school to disseminate the contents of the evaluation report as they see fit. ACOVENE may, where requested, provide copies

of evaluation reports to competent authorities; however, the programme and the school shall be notified and may raise an objection in writing prior to disclosure, except where disclosure is required by law (please see III4 and III5)

VII.12 Programmes that have undergone evaluation shall be given the opportunity to provide feedback on the evaluation process and the performance of the site visit team. Any comments received will be shared with the evaluators.

VII.13 In accordance with ACOVENE policy, all information related to the accreditation of a veterinary nursing programme is strictly confidential. This includes, but is not limited to, visitation reports, letters, self-evaluation and accreditation materials, reports, correspondence, and the content of any discussion related to the programme and/or its accreditation. All requests for information related to a specific institution and/or programme must be referred to ACOVENE, or the respective institution.

VII.14 ACOVENE may, where requested, provide copies of such information to competent authorities; however, the programme and the institution shall be notified and may raise an objection in writing prior to disclosure, except where disclosure is required by law.

Conditions and recommendation categories

Conditions

- VIII.1 Conditions apply in situations where a programme is unable to meet a Standard.
- VIII.2 Documentation of significant progress toward compliance with each condition must be provided by the time ACOVENE reviews the programme's accreditation status, the date of which will be notified by the visit panel chair.
- VIII.3 Failure to demonstrate compliance may result in refusal of accreditation or a reduction in the programme's accreditation status.

Major recommendation(s)

- VIII.4 Major recommendations apply to situations that seriously jeopardize a programme's ability to meet a Standard.
- VIII.5 Requirements for schools with major recommendations:
- Must provide a plan within 6 months outlining how they will resolve the major recommendations.
 - Documentation of steps taken toward compliance is required, in accordance with ACOVENE guidelines.
 - Must report progress in their annual SER.
 - The school must cooperate fully with ACOVENE and maintain open communication.
- VIII.6 Programmes must demonstrate progress toward meeting each major recommendation on an annual basis.
- VIII.7 Failure to comply within the assigned two-year period, before the next scheduled full evaluation, may result in a reduction of the programme's accreditation status.

Minor recommendation(s)

- VIII.8 Minor recommendations are suggestions for programme improvement and do not affect the programme's accreditation status.

Special site visit

- IX.1 Where review of information indicates that major changes have occurred in an accredited programme that may impact a programme's ability to meet the Standards of Accreditation, an on-site evaluation may be requested. A special site visit would then be conducted to determine the programme's degree of compliance with the Standards. A special site visit can be either focused or comprehensive, depending on the nature of the concerns. The letter of notification of this action from ACOVENE will indicate the scope of the visit and any specific areas of concern.
- IX.2 Special site visits are conducted when it is necessary for ACOVENE to review information about the programme that can only be obtained or documented on-site. The ACOVENE may also request a special report from the involved programme prior to conducting a special site visit. Special site visits are conducted for the following reasons:
- a. to assess the programme's progress in implementing recommendations (previously identified deficiencies) from the most recent site visit report of evaluation
 - b. to assess the impact of major changes (in curriculum, faculty, facilities, etc.) on the programme's ability to continue to meet the accreditation standards
 - c. to investigate a complaint raising questions about the programme's compliance with the accreditation Standards
 - d. to respond to a request from the chief executive officer or programme administrator.

Special site visit panel composition and fees

- IX.3 Depending on the circumstances prompting the special site visit and on the need for particular expertise, ACOVENE will determine the personnel necessary to conduct the visit.
- IX.4 A fee, determined by the Board to cover necessary visitor expenses, will be levied for special site visits.

Appendices

Appendix A: Application for accreditation of programmes for educating veterinary nurses

A.1 Your application for accreditation will consist of two parts:

a. Your self-study report

This describes the nature of your organisation, the resources you have in place to support veterinary nurse teaching and the nature of your course. The accreditation application form and guidance will assist you in providing the required information

b. Evidence in support of your self-study report

A.2 In addition to completing the accreditation application form, you will need to demonstrate how the school meets the ACOVENE standards criteria. Please refer to the Standards list where possible sources of evidence are listed. Please use the “ACOVENE application form and guidance” for submitting your application. This document is available from acovene@rcvs.org.uk

Submitting your application

A.3 You **must** submit your application electronically. ACOVENE communicates with schools and visitors electronically; paper-based applications are large documents and cannot be processed.

A.4 Where you do not have electronic copies of supporting documents, these should be scanned and converted into PDF files using Adobe Acrobat or other PDF-writing software. Jpg or tiff files are also acceptable if you cannot produce PDF files.

A.5 Before you submit your application to ACOVENE, please contact the secretariat to agree the best way to send the application and evidence documents.

A.6 Remember do not submit paper documents!

Appendix B: Dossier of European Competencies for veterinary nurses

- B.1 The *Dossier of European Competences for the veterinary nurse* (separate publication) is a resource for veterinary nurse programmes to support curriculum development and instruction. It sets a minimum standard for programme content and is used as an accreditation monitoring tool by ACOVENE.
- B.2 The Dossier articulates the complex role of the veterinary nurse and encourages instruction in essential “Day One” competencies. A veterinary nurse student, having completed the curriculum, will have gained the prerequisite knowledge and perspective to enable them to practise as a member of the health care veterinary team.
- B.3 The programme must provide documented criteria for evaluating each student’s completion of every competence. These criteria must be consistent with standards that reflect contemporary veterinary practice.
- B.4 Although the Dossier will serve as a foundation on which to build each programme’s curriculum, veterinary nurse instructors are encouraged to expand the listed competences with additional knowledge and skills representing current trends in veterinary medicine.
- B.5 The Dossier of European Competences is available from acovene@rcvs.org.uk.

Appendix C: Annual self-evaluation report

- C.1 Accredited schools are required to submit self-evaluation reports (SERs) in relation to each accredited programme annually, as directed by ACOVENE.
- C.2 The SER informs ACOVENE's ongoing monitoring of accredited schools. In addition to providing statistical data about the programme, it should also demonstrate the school's ongoing internal management of quality and standards as well as a report and documentation on the progress of any recommendations.
- C.3 In completing the SER, a school should also ensure that all material quality issues that have arisen during the reporting period are reported. Some, or all, of such issues may have been resolved. However, the ability of a school to identify, and address, issues, is a major indicator of quality management. It is therefore highly relevant to report such matters, and how they are being addressed, or have been resolved during the reporting period.
- C.4 A SER that documents no such issues may indicate a school that is unable to identify, or address, salient risks to the quality of its programme delivery.
- C.5 Please use the self-evaluation form provided by ACOVENE to submit your report.

Interim reports

- C.6 ACOVENE may require submission of an interim report from any accredited programme. Determination of the need for an interim report is made by ACOVENE after review of the programme's Report of Evaluation or annual/biennial report. The Board will specify areas of special concern and a due date for the interim report.
- C.7 In preparing the interim report, programme personnel should focus on the particular area(s) designated by the Board, and describe, in detail, the progress made in addressing the area of concern. ACOVENE will review the report, either electronically or at its next regularly scheduled meeting. Based on the progress noted in the interim report, the Board may request attendance of a programme representative at its next regularly scheduled meeting, or a site visit by an evaluation team. The cost for such eventualities will be borne by the respective programme/parent institution.

Appendix D: Procedure for appeal of adverse decisions on accreditation

This policy describes the procedure for review and appeal of adverse accreditation decisions made by ACOVENE.

D.1 Definition of an Adverse Decision:

An adverse decision means

- a. that a school or organisation does not receive initial or renewed accreditation,
- b. that a request to change accreditation status is refused, or
- c. that the school or organisation is granted less than full accreditation.

D.2 Grounds for Review or Appeal:

If ACOVENE makes an adverse decision, the affected school or organisation may request a review if the school or organisation argues that the decision is wrong because ACOVENE acted unfairly by:

- a. Ignoring the established ACOVENE criteria for accreditation (ACOVENE Policies and Procedures), and/or
- b. Not following ACOVENE's own stated procedures, and/or
- c. Not considering all the evidence and documents submitted at the time of the evaluation.

D.3 An affected school or organisation cannot request a review or appeal simply because it disagrees with the visitors' observations or with ACOVENE's decision.

D.4 Review procedure

When an affected school or organisation requests a review of an adverse decision, the following procedure will be followed:

D.5 Review (free of charge)

Notification and submission

- a. Within 30 days of being informed of an adverse decision, the affected school or organisation must notify the Chair of ACOVENE in writing that it intends to request a review.
- b. Within 60 days of being informed of an adverse decision, the school or organisation must provide written submissions supporting its review request.
- c. No documents other than those already submitted during the accreditation process may be submitted.

D.6 Accreditation Status During Review

The school's or organisation's current accreditation status prior to the adverse decision will remain unchanged during the review.

No public announcement of the adverse decision will be made until the review, and any appeals have been concluded, and a final decision has been given.

D.7 Review by the ACOVENE Board

The adverse decision will be reviewed by the ACOVENE Board (free of charge) within 60 days of receiving the written submissions for the appeal.

The Board will examine all evidence provided by the school or organisation in support of the review and check whether

- a. The established ACOVENE criteria in the ACOVENE Policies and Procedures for accreditation were ignored and/or
- b. ACOVENE's own stated procedures were not followed and/or
- c. any of the evidence and documentation presented at the time of the evaluation were not considered.

D.8 Outcomes of the Review

If the Board finds that none of these criteria apply, the original decision will be confirmed.

If the Board finds that any of these criteria do apply, the adverse decision will be remade by ACOVENE.

D.9 If the ACOVENE Board confirms an original decision following a review, the affected school or organisation may request an appeal, and the following procedure will be followed:

D.10 Appeals Procedure (Fees apply)

Notification and Submission

Within 30 days of being informed of an adverse decision review outcome, the affected school or organisation must notify the Chair of ACOVENE in writing that it intends to request an appeal.

Within 60 days of being informed of an adverse decision review outcome, the school or organisation must provide written submissions supporting its appeal request.

Appointment of Independent Review Panel

Within 30 days of receiving notice that an appeal has been requested, the ACOVENE Board will appoint an independent review panel not involved in this accreditation consisting of three people:

- a. Two ACOVENE accreditors
- b. One ACOVENE accredited school or organisation member (not from same country as the appellant)
- c. One of the panel members will act as Chair determined by the panel.

D.11 Accreditation Status During Appeal

The school's current accreditation status will remain unchanged during the appeal.

No public announcement of the adverse decision will be made until the appeal has been concluded and a final decision has been given.

D.12 Consideration of Appeal

The Review Panel will consider the appeal and any supporting submissions at a meeting, which must take place within 60 days of receiving the supporting submissions.

The Review Panel will examine all evidence and check whether

- a) The established ACOVENE criteria for accreditation (ACOVENE Policies and Procedures) were ignored and/or
- b) ACOVENE's own stated procedures were not followed and/or
- c) any of the evidence and documentation presented at the time of the evaluation were not considered.

D.13 Hearing Procedure - Arrangements

A virtual or in person hearing will be held at a mutually convenient time within 60 days of receiving the documentation supporting the independent review.

ACOVENE will schedule and organise the hearing and will notify both the independent review panel and the affected school or organisation by email.

D.14 Rights of the Parties

At any hearing, both the affected school and organisation and ACOVENE have the right to:

- a. Present witnesses,
- b. Submit any evidence relevant to the case, and
- c. Question the other party's witnesses.
- d. Conduct of the Hearing
- e. Witnesses giving oral testimony will be sworn in by the Chair of the independent review panel.
- f. Before allowing testimony about the character or general reputation of anyone, the panel must ensure that the testimony is directly relevant to the case.
- g. Although legal counsel is not required for the hearing, the independent review panel and/or ACOVENE and/or the school or organisation may have legal counsel present to provide advice on procedural matters

D.15 Outcome of the Hearing

The independent review panel may either confirm ACOVENE's decision or instruct ACOVENE to reconsider the decision, providing reasons in either case.

The panel's conclusion will be documented in writing and kept as a permanent record.

A transcript of the proceedings will be made following an advance request in writing of

- a. the independent review panel or
- b. the affected school or organisation or
- c. ACOVENE may request in advance in writing.

The cost of the transcript will be paid by the party that requested it.

D.16 Costs of an appeal

Appeal fees will be set based on expected costs.

If the appeal is successful, ACOVENE will reimburse these expenses:

If held in person, travel, meals, and lodging for the independent review panel and witnesses will be paid by the affected school or organisation requesting the hearing.

Any other costs (i.e. Loss of earnings of the panel) related to the review request will also be the responsibility of the institution requesting the hearing.

Legal counsel fees must be paid by the party requesting them, regardless of the outcome of the appeal.

D.17 Decisions resulting from appeal or review processes

Final Decision and Records:

The independent review panel's report will be reviewed at the next regular ACOVENE board meeting.

If the panel recommends that ACOVENE reconsider its initial decision, all ACOVENE discussions and the factors considered before making a final decision will be formally recorded.

The chief executive officer of the school or organisation will receive copies of the hearing panel's decision, including a detailed statement of the findings.

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