

School of Veterinary Medical Sciences

University of Camerino

Exit Talk (April, 8th, 2011)

Dear Rector, Authorities, Director, Liaison Officers, Colleagues, Staff and Students,

At the end of such an intense visit during which the team has enjoyed respect and full collaboration, we want to thank you very much for your commitment and attention. Especially, we want to thank those amongst you who contributed to writing and reviewing such a time-demanding key document as the Self Evaluation Report. We also want to express our gratitude to the liaison officers, our colleagues Stefano Rea and Stefano Romagnoli, who facilitated our work with efficiency coupled with discretion.

Several positive aspects emerged during the visit, which consistently matched the SER content. Amongst the most relevant ones are:

- The positive atmosphere that is clearly evident in the establishment, mirroring the good and close relationship between the students and the teaching and support staff
- The relatively low average age of the teaching and support staff, and the high level of motivation and willingness, which enabled them to deal with the drastic changes that the faculty has had to overcome in recent years
- The excellent relationship of the School with the veterinary profession, the agricultural and business community and society in general within the Marche region.

- The commitment and dedication of the whole staff and young collaborators at both the small and large animal clinics, which has enabled them to overcome the difficulties related to the shortage of teaching and support staff, in order to actually expose the students to an adequate caseload of horses and companion animals
- The awareness of the faculty that good teaching is the priority
- The increase of “hands-on” activity in the new curriculum. The team was able to verify that all aspects of the learning programmes are covered in the Degree Course of Veterinary Medicine, which enables a new veterinary graduate to enter, with sufficient skills, the working community and to face the varied and demanding tasks of the profession. The courses are properly delivered and include a valuable practical activity of high quality. During all formal and informal meetings with local representatives and visiting students, complete satisfaction was expressed with the teaching programme offered.
- The satisfactory situation of most of the new facilities and the high standard of equipment in some areas.

However, as you probably know, our task is also to detect deficiencies which, if present, may lead to denial of approval or the intermediate decision of a conditional approval by the ECOVE Committee. This is done by the visiting team according to shared and transparent guidelines which are themselves the object of periodical evaluation and revision.

Beside this comment, the team noted that due to national and local factors, lack of funds is probably the main problem of the School, which essentially prevents the enrolment of new permanent staff as well as the possibility of extending or making more stable the appointments of non permanent staff.

The number of teachers involved in the Degree Course in Veterinary Medicine seems to be adequate if we just check the ratios related with the teaching potential of the school, but the team considers that the total amount of teaching load for individual academic staff is too high, and may keep teachers away from research tasks. It is also clear that the number of support staff is too low, taking into consideration the needs of the School in both teaching and research. The existing shortage of teaching and support staff may, in the medium-term, adversely affect the quality of practical teaching, delivery of services to the community and also research opportunities in the School. It is clear that a strategic increase in the number of teaching and support staff, would augment their efficacy and efficiency and the team of experts strongly recommends that this is taken into consideration by the university administration.

The premises in general are satisfactory and in good condition, and are easily accessible for students, staff and visitors. Nevertheless, the building which hosts the microbiology and infectious diseases laboratories does not have sufficient space.

As far as the General Curriculum is concerned, the team was able to verify that all aspects of the learning programmes are covered in the Degree Course in Veterinary Medicine. The courses are properly delivered and include extremely valuable high quality practical activities.

The average duration of study time at the School of Veterinary Medical Sciences of the University of Camerino as assessed during the last 5 year period, is 7.96, which we consider is excessive. The team hopes that the full implementation of the new curriculum will correct this undesirable situation which also is linked to the problem of “off course” students.

Basic Sciences are well covered with a good coordination and a strong veterinary orientation. The University of Camerino should guarantee the basic knowledge of all the students in EU-listed Basic subjects such as “Physics”.

Where the Clinical Sciences are concerned, the overall image is very positive. A “hands-on” teaching and learning is a priority and is successfully implemented in both the large and small animal clinics. The highly motivated team of teachers in turn inspire the students who are overall very proud of their faculty. The surgical case-load which is just adequate for the number of students will certainly continue to grow in the future due to the recent opening of the small animal emergency service. This will increase the students exposure to a larger variety of cases.

The lack of ophthalmology teaching should be compensated with the creation of a specialised consultation in ophthalmology. Although there are some staff with European Board qualifications, not all of them supervise residents. Whilst workload make this understandable, it would be desirable in future to reinforce such programmes. Incorporating diplomates in the clinical specialties either as full-time or as visiting professors will help start new residency programs and will contribute greatly to the international recognition of the university and will stimulate clinical research.

On the subject of Animal Production, there is a very good balance between theoretical and practical teaching, and the team's impression is that the Camerino students are very well educated in the principles of animal production. Particularly impressive is the concept of involving private farms in the student education. Students are included in virtually all steps of animal husbandry and management on the farm. There is no farm owned by the faculty, but the use of private farms for teaching is a very good substitute. The faculty has to be congratulated for this concept and its organization. In summary, we have the impression that the education in animal production is one highlight of the veterinary education at the School of Veterinary Medical Sciences of the University of Camerino.

In the area of Food Hygiene and Public Health, the hours listed for lectures, laboratory, desk based and non clinical animal work, and the arrangements for Tirocinio, appear satisfactory. The presentation on the course content was easily verified by observation of the documents and records confirming the attendance of students at lectures, their detailed practical group activities and Tirocinio, as well as a selection of Theses. The staff must be congratulated for the work they have done to demonstrate so clearly how they have organised their courses and verified the activities that their students undertake.

Some weaknesses of lesser importance were found, as always happens in each visited establishment, but their discussion would be inappropriate now. They will be included in the draft of the final report that the Director will receive within the next weeks.

After the on-site visitation of the School of Veterinary Medical Sciences of the University of Camerino, the unanimous opinion of the team members was that **no Category 1 Deficiencies were found. Consequently, the team will recommend to the ECOVE to assign the status of approval for Stage 1.**

This is all, we congratulate you for your achievements and we thank you very much for your attention.

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