



University College Dublin

REVIEW GROUP REPORT

Periodic Quality Review

UCD School of Veterinary Medicine

February 2023

Accepted by the UCD Governing Authority at its meeting on 22 June 2023

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Key Findings of the Review Group

The Review Group (RG) has identified a number of key findings in relation to areas of good practice operating within the UCD School of Veterinary Medicine and also areas which the RG would highlight as requiring improvement. The main section of this Report sets out all observations, commendations and recommendations of the RG in more detail.

Examples of Good Practice

The RG identified a number of commendations in particular:

1. The RG found there to be a good relationship amongst all the School's Section Heads and notably between the veterinary nursing and veterinary programme teams. This is not always the case in all comparable institutions and the School's success in avoiding academic "tribes" is commendable. (Commendation 3.12)
2. The School's student focused approach and resources are commendable. Students identified an extremely healthy culture of not competing against each other which has also had a positive knock-on impact on how they support each other in their learning. The RG found the School's pastoral supports are highly valued by the students especially those provided by the School's Student Advisor. The School's library was also highlighted by students as an invaluable resource that supports their learning. (Commendation 3.14)
3. The RG found a strong sense of inclusion and teamwork across the UCD Veterinary Hospital and indeed across the whole school with everyone keen to help each other and work collaboratively. This strong team dynamic and sense of community between the students themselves as well as between staff and students is to be commended. (Commendation 4.8)
4. The School's successful accreditation with one national and four international accrediting bodies is an excellent achievement. The School is one of only seven Veterinary Schools in Europe to be accredited with the American Veterinary Medical Association. (Commendation 6.8)
5. The School is to be commended on the value it places on curriculum change and enhancement and it was evident from the SAR and discussions that a significant amount of reflection and research has informed initiatives for improving the quality of the School's programmes and how they are delivered. (Commendation 6.10)

Prioritised Recommendations for Improvement

The RG would suggest that the following be prioritised:

1. The RG recommend the School introduce a formal process for staff induction to ensure that all administrative bases are covered for all staff. Consideration should also be given to introducing an informal 'buddy system' as part of the induction. (Recommendation 2.14)
2. Several clinical areas are understaffed, as is common in the sector. Many UK universities address this critical issue, in part, through the use of additional payments made to clinical staff, often funded from the commercial income that they effectively bring in through clinical work. In some cases this is a clinical supplement and in other cases this is through enhanced out of hours payments. The RG recommend the School explore whether such an approach could be developed to provide additional incentives within the UCD system. (Recommendation 2.15)
3. The RG recommend that all school staff who interact with students in an educational capacity should receive education in pedagogy that is relevant to their role. (Recommendation 3.17)
4. Considerable emphasis is currently placed on day-to-day interactions with staff where feedback can be provided and while these informal mechanisms are important and reflect the strong sense of community within the School, more formal mechanisms ensure that everyone has an opportunity to be heard and is aware of how to provide feedback. The RG recommend the School develops a systematic framework for student feedback via fora such as Staff-Student Liaison meetings, with an agenda, minutes, clear leadership and clear communication of the School responses to feedback. (Recommendation 6.13)
5. The RG recommend a review and enhancement of widening participation within the School. This could include putting in place a system to track progress and retention of students from different backgrounds and review of the systems in place to encourage participation. (Recommendation 6.15)
6. The RG recommend the School encourage more uptake among students of courses such as the manual handling training courses which are offered by the UCD SIRC Office. These would be particularly relevant to the School's Veterinary Nursing students. (Recommendation 7.14)

1. Introduction and Overview of UCD School of Veterinary Medicine

Introduction

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of a quality review of the School of Veterinary Medicine University College Dublin, which was undertaken in November 2022. The School response to the Review Group Report is attached as Appendix 1.

The Review Framework

- 1.2 Irish Universities have collectively agreed a framework for their quality review and quality improvement systems, which is consistent with both the legislative requirements of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012), and international good practice (e.g. Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2015). Quality reviews are carried out in academic, administrative and support service units.

- 1.3 The purpose of periodic review is to assist the University to assure itself of the quality of each of its constituent units, and to utilise learning from this developmental process in order to effect improvement, including:

- To monitor the quality of the student experience, and of teaching and learning.
- To monitor research activity, including management of research activity; assessing the research performance with regard to research productivity, research income, recruiting and supporting doctoral students.
- To identify, encourage and disseminate good practice, and to identify challenges and how to address these.
- To provide an opportunity for units to test the effectiveness of their systems and procedures for monitoring and enhancing quality and standards.
- To encourage the development and enhancement of these systems, in the context of current and emerging provision.
- To inform the University's strategic planning process.
- The output report provides robust evidence for external accreditation bodies.
- The process provides an external benchmark on practice and curriculum.
- To provide public information on the University's capacity to assure the quality and standards of its awards. The University's implementation of its quality procedures enables it to demonstrate how it discharges its responsibilities for assuring the quality

and standards of its awards, as required by the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

The Review Process

1.4 Typically, the review model comprises four major elements:

- Preparation of a Self-assessment report (SAR)
- A visit by a Review Group that includes UCD staff and external experts, both national and international. The site visit normally will take place over a two or three day period
- Preparation of a Review Group report that is made public
- Agreement of an action plan for improvement (Quality Improvement Plan) based on the RG report's recommendations. The University will also monitor progress against the improvement plan

Full details of the review process can be found on the UCD Quality Office website: www.ucd.ie/quality.

The Review Group

1.5 The composition of the RG for the UCD School of Veterinary Medicine was as follows:

- Professor Paul McCabe, Dean of Graduate Studies, University College Dublin (Chair)
- Dr Cliona Kelly, Associate Dean, Sutherland School of Law, University College Dublin (Deputy Chair)
- Professor Elizabeth Armitage-Chan, Professor of Higher Education and Acting Director of the LIVE Centre, Royal Veterinary College, University of London (Extern)
- Professor James Wood, Alborada Professor of Equine and Farm Animal Science and Head of Department of Veterinary Medicine, University of Cambridge (Extern)

1.6 The RG visited the School in person from 14-17 November 2022 and held meetings with School staff, undergraduate and postgraduate students, graduates, employers, other University staff. The site visit schedule is included as Appendix 2.

1.7 In addition to the Self-assessment Report, the RG considered documentation provided by the School and the University during the site visit.

1.8 This Report has been read and approved by all members of the Review Group.

Preparation of the Self-assessment Report (SAR)

- 1.9 Following a briefing from the UCD Quality Office a Self-assessment Report Coordinating Committee (SARCC) was established by the School.
- 1.10 The SAR was prepared in the period February to September 2022. Staff were consulted during the process with specific aspects of the report discussed in various fora. The final draft report was developed by the SAR Co-ordinating Committee reflecting the various inputs with individual members taking responsibility for chapters of the report. All staff were given the opportunity to comment on the final draft and to contribute to the final report.
- 1.11 The RG commend the School on the comprehensive and informative SAR. It was clear to the RG that the School had taken the time to assess their teaching, research and operations honestly and engaged in valuable reflection on these themes. The RG found the document was appropriately inward looking. However, the RG noted at times it did not demonstrate an external perspective. For example, there was no mention of the current national debate on veterinary training in Ireland. During the RG discussions with the School it became evident that the School have been engaging in strategic discussions of this issue at school and college level even though this was not included in the SAR.

The University

- 1.12 University College Dublin (UCD) is a large and diverse university whose origins date back to 1854. The University is situated on a large modern campus about 4 km to the south of the centre of Dublin.
- 1.13 The University Strategic Plan (2020 to 2024) states that the University's mission is: "to contribute to the flourishing of Dublin, Ireland, Europe and the world through the excellence and impact of our research and scholarship, the quality of our graduates and our global engagement; providing a supportive community in which every member of the University is enabled to achieve their full potential".

The University is currently organised into six colleges and 37 schools:

- UCD College of Arts and Humanities
- UCD College of Business
- UCD College of Engineering and Architecture
- UCD College of Health and Agricultural Sciences
- UCD College of Social Sciences and Law
- UCD College of Science

- 1.14 As one of the largest universities on the island of Ireland, UCD supports a broad, deep and rich academic community in Science, Business, Engineering, Health Sciences, Agriculture, Veterinary Medicine, Arts, Law, and Social Sciences. There are currently more than 33,000 students on our UCD campus, with approximately 18,000 undergraduates, 12,600 postgraduates and 2,200 Occasional students. This includes over 9,500 international students from 152 countries. In addition, UCD has almost 5,200 students studying UCD degree programmes on campuses overseas. Undergraduate degree students have the choice of 38 entry routes on offer via the CAO system, while UCD offers many other options at graduate level.

UCD School of Veterinary Medicine

- 1.15 The UCD School of Veterinary Medicine is one of the five schools, along with the Schools of Medicine; Public Health, Physiotherapy and Sports Science; Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems and Agriculture and Food Science in the College of Health and Agricultural Sciences (CHAS).
- 1.16 The School dates from the Royal Veterinary College of Ireland, founded in 1900 and currently delivers the only veterinary educational programme on the island of Ireland.
- 1.17 The School offers two programmes of Veterinary Medicine: a 5-year undergraduate programme and a 4-year graduate-entry programme. Students are required to complete 36 weeks of work placements (pre-clinical extramural studies and clinical extramural studies) as part of the programme requirements. During the final year, clinical rotations take place mainly in the UCD Veterinary Hospital. Both programmes lead to the award of the degree of Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine (MVB)
- 1.18 The MVB degree programme is accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC), the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE), the Veterinary Council of Ireland (VCI) and most recently (June 2021) by the RCVS (Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons) in the UK.
- 1.19 The School also offers a BSc programme in Veterinary Nursing; two on-line 30 ECTS Graduate Certificate programmes in Dairy Herd Health and Small Animal Medicine and a Professional Certificate in Training on Experimental Animal use Regulations and Procedures (TEARAP) programme. During third year Veterinary Nursing students also complete work placements within veterinary practices. During the final year, Veterinary Nursing rotations generally take place in the UCD Veterinary Hospital.
- 1.20 As well as research programmes at both Master and PhD level, the UCD School offers a professional doctorate programme (Doctor of Veterinary Medical Specialisation) which provides training for clinical residents in the UCD Veterinary Hospital to complete the requirements of the various European Specialist Colleges, while at the same time registering for a UCD Doctoral degree.

- 1.21 The School's teaching and research facilities include a clinical skills centre, the Veterinary Medicine library, the UCD Veterinary Hospital and UCD Lyons Farm.
- 1.22 The School staff profile consists of an FTE count of 89.2 academic, 26.9 Research and 84.9 Professional staff. There has been an increase of total staff headcount from 218 (March 2018) to 221 (February 2022). (Data provided by the School).
- 1.23 The School academic grade profile consists of Full Professor (9.5), Professor (7.0), Associate Professor (16.2), Lecturer/Assistant Professor (41.1), Other Academic & Teaching (15.5). The overall academic gender balance is 59% female. (March 2022 data provided by the School).
- 1.24 The number of academic staff increased by nine from March 2018 until March 2022; the number of dedicated research staff has remained constant.
- 1.25 The School has 896 Undergraduate, 56 Graduate Taught, 66 Graduate Research and 34 Occasional/CPD students. The student:staff ratio is 11:1. The gender balance is 24% male and 74% female and 25% of the student body are international students. (Data provided by the School in the SAR for the academic year 2021/2022).
- 1.26 The School has ranked in the top 40 in the QS World University Rankings by Subject since 2015, achieving its highest ranking of 23rd in 2021.
- 1.27 The School's strategic plan, aligned to the College strategy, 'One Health, One Welfare 2019-2024' sets out its vision of 'a flourishing veterinary school, positively impacting health, animal welfare, and the environment' underpinned by a mission to be an 'inclusive community, delivering excellence in education, research and clinical endeavour'.
- 1.28 The School houses the UCD Centre for Veterinary Epidemiology and Risk Analysis, the national resource centre for veterinary epidemiology in Ireland. Its primary focus is on scientific contribution in support of national decision-making in animal health and welfare.

2. Organisation, Management and Staffing of the School

General Comments and Context

- 2.1 Throughout the site visit, it was evident to the RG that there is a very strong sense of community across the School with faculty and staff genuinely committed to the School and its aims.
- 2.2 The RG found the School's management structures described in the SAR to be clear and with good representation of staff across the various School committees, including a Staff:Student Liaison Committee and a bi-annual all School Forum.

- 2.3 The SAR also notes the School has an External Advisory Board with representation from equine, farm animal and small animal practice as well as representatives of the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Marine and representatives of the agricultural and pharmaceutical industries.
- 2.4 The RG noted that the clarity of structures and processes were as expected for a school that has repeatedly been reviewed by external accrediting bodies, all of which require description of and clarity around management processes.
- 2.5 The SAR notes also the involvement of members of the School's faculty in strategic planning processes, committees and working groups at college and university level. For example engagement with the College level 'One Health, One Welfare 2019-2024' strategy.
- 2.6 The RG found strong structures for staff development (for example, the University Performance for Growth system and the Development Framework for Faculty) and recent successes in the promotion of academic staff within the School (15 since 2017). Staff training and development regarding teaching methods is covered in chapter 3 of this report and staff research leave and sabbatical is addressed in comments in chapter 5 of this report.
- 2.7 The RG found that while induction is provided at university level for new permanent academic staff and faculty, there is currently no formal induction process in the School for all staff.
- 2.8 The RG noted the workload model for clinicians in the UCD Veterinary Hospital is 50% time on clinics and 50% time off clinics (for research, scholarly activity, administration). The RG noted this is to be inconsistent with the University 40:40:20 (research, teaching and administration) workload model.
- 2.9 The SAR highlighted that while there have been some successes, challenges persist in keeping posts in all disciplinary areas filled due to very strong competition from the private sector (for example, neurology and cardiology were specifically mentioned, as well as small animal surgery, as having unfilled positions).
- 2.10 Overall the RG was impressed with the School's facilities and the UCD Veterinary Hospital. These facilities are modern, in many cases 'state of the art' and provide high level support to teaching and research in the School. However, the RG noted concerns raised by staff in relation to teaching and office facilities at the UCD Lyons Farm, although these were not visited during the site visit due to time constraints in the schedule. A video of facilities was however provided.

Commendations

- 2.11 The School is to be commended for the clarity of its management processes; the RG found there is a strong management team with a clear and shared strategic vision for the School.
- 2.12 The RG commends the processes for staff development and recent good successes in promotion of staff which took into consideration their clinical responsibilities.

- 2.13 The central importance to the School of the Athena-SWAN Bronze Award (2018) and the process was recognised in several conversations in the course of the site visit and is to be commended.

Recommendations

- 2.14 The RG recommend the School introduce a formal process for staff induction to ensure that all administrative bases are covered for all staff. Consideration should also be given to introducing an informal 'buddy system' as part of the induction.
- 2.15 Several clinical areas are understaffed, as is common in the sector. Many UK universities address this critical issue, in part, through the use of additional payments made to clinical staff, often funded from the commercial income that they effectively bring in through clinical work. In some cases this is a clinical supplement and in other cases this is through enhanced out of hours payments. The RG recommend the School explore whether such an approach could be developed to provide additional incentives within the UCD system.
- 2.16 There were several references made during the site visit to the UCD Veterinary Hospital being loss making. The RG found that the budgeting processes that may underlie this perception do not appear to consider the costs of teaching, which is the major output from the hospital. The RG is of the opinion that working in an enterprise regarded as loss making includes implied criticism. The RG recommend that alongside the necessary drives to constantly improve efficiency, the UCD Veterinary Hospital should no longer be described as loss making. It is important to ensure that the great value placed on clinical teaching by the School is not diminished unintentionally.
- 2.17 The RG recommend the School ensure that the benefits from faculty engagement in strategic planning processes are recognised through their continued involvement in regular away day and planning meetings.

3. Quality of Programmes and Student Learning Experience

General Comments and Context

- 3.1 The Veterinary Medicine and the Veterinary Nursing degrees are both accredited by a number of external bodies, which is challenging to achieve and demonstrates that the programme is doing very well to meet all necessary requirements.
- 3.2 The RG noted there is also strong demand for the programmes among national and international students, as evidenced in the statistics over the past five years provided by the School in the SAR.
- 3.3 Recommendations for curriculum change are made by the School's Curriculum Committee and are subject to approval by the Programme Board.3.4 Based on the SAR and curriculum documentation provided by the School, the RG found evidence that the curriculum aligns with the School's strategic plan, including the arguably fewer tangible areas such as excellence in education and exceptional student experience. This was reinforced during the

RG site visit; conversations with key individuals (staff and students) additionally evidenced the School's commitment to self-directed learning. However, it was also noted that this is sometimes challenging to achieve given the intensity of the timetable, offering little space for self-directed study.

- 3.5 The RG noted the modular nature of the curricula for Veterinary Medicine and Veterinary Nursing is aligned to university structures. However the RG also noted this can prove challenging for the School in providing an integrated curriculum that scaffolds the synthesis of knowledge from different modules, as required for professional practice. The RG noted this also places a very high assessment burden on both staff and students.
- 3.6 As part of their accreditation, veterinary students are expected to take part in a placement outside of term time, referred to as extra-mural studies. This is not a UCD module taken for credit, however it is required to obtain professional accreditation.
- 3.7 Given the nature of veterinary programmes students are taught (to varying extents and often informally) by a very diverse group of staff, which in addition to faculty includes nurses, laboratory technicians, residents, interns, PhD students and postdoctoral staff. In some situations this is happening in complicated learning environments (such as the clinic), where staff priorities also include attending to patients and clients.
- 3.8 The RG noted the School's 'Vet Ed Hub' unit (made up of a small team with expertise in pedagogy, assessment design and educational technology) is working well in supporting curriculum design, innovation and delivery, although this resource appears predominantly targeted at support for academic staff.
- 3.9 The RG found some inconsistencies between the descriptions of support provided for teaching and assessment and the reported experiences of those involved. For example, support/training in the delivery of learning objectives and the assessment of Direct Observation of Procedural Skills (DOPs) is perceived by section heads as being provided, however the veterinary students who met with the RG recognised deficits in inter-examiner reliability (i.e. ability of different examiners to record the same finding in the same way). There is also a perception by staff that training on feedback provision is provided, however the residents that met the RG expressed the view that they felt under-supported in this area.
- 3.10 Student survey data (provided to the RG in the SAR appendices) and discussions with students provided clear evidence that students feel very well supported. For example, while North American students noted the "culture shock" associated with different education systems (particularly the emphasis on self-directed learning) they also noted that the supports provided by the School facilitated them to work through this.
- 3.11 The student representatives that met with the RG identified positive experiences of where their feedback to programme teams had effected change. However, students identified an ongoing issue with requesting online learning materials that supported lectures (pdf and power point versions of slides, lecture notes, etc, as well as the variable timing of these).

- 3.12 The RG noted that the responsibility for developing and sourcing funding for the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine Specialisation (DVMS) projects lies with the academic clinician supervisors. The RG were concerned that this represents a risk of increased burden being placed on an already stretched clinical team.

Commendations

- 3.13 The RG found there to be a good relationship amongst all the School's Section Heads and notably between the Veterinary Nursing and Veterinary Medicine programme teams. This is not always the case in all comparable institutions and the School's success in avoiding academic "tribes" is commendable.
- 3.14 The School's student focused approach and resources are commendable. Students identified an extremely healthy culture of not competing against each other which has also had a positive knock-on impact on how they support each other in their learning. The RG found the School's pastoral supports are highly valued by the students especially those provided by the School's Student Advisor. The School's library was also highlighted by students as an invaluable resource that supports their learning.
- 3.15 The programme structures are such that Veterinary Medicine students and Veterinary Nursing students are in final year rotations together in the hospital. The RG noted this provides an excellent opportunity for Inter-Professional Education (IPE). Discussions with the students demonstrate that this opportunity is being optimised. Not only are the students working and learning together but they are also clearly forming a strong interprofessional community. The formal, informal and social structures that facilitate this inter-professional approach are to be commended.
- 3.16 Conversations with the Section Heads demonstrated a highly collaborative approach to problem-solving and curriculum design. The result is a well-integrated curriculum despite the challenges of modularisation and is to be commended.

Recommendations

- 3.17 The RG recommend that all school staff who interact with students in an educational capacity should receive education in pedagogy that is relevant to their role.
- 3.18 The RG recommend the School explores and identifies a local "best practice" approach to the provision of learning materials for students (lecture slides, lecture notes, etc) and communicates this to staff and students, facilitating (although not necessarily obligating) a more consistent approach and improved management of student expectations.
- 3.19 The "10 + 10" credit approach taken with the pathobiology modules represents an example of excellent practice, allowing integration of content and concepts in teaching and assessment as well as the use of a case-based approach. The RG recommend that others involved in programme design look for opportunities to build on and replicate this model.

4. UCD Veterinary Hospital

General Comments and Context

- 4.1 As part of the site visit, the RG undertook a tour of the Veterinary Hospital. Based on the information in the SAR and reinforced during the site visit, the RG found the UCD Veterinary Hospital to have a good caseload across the main species.
- 4.2 Discussions with senior staff demonstrated that the complex balancing act between clinical income, the need to remain commercially competitive, managing teaching requirements (both providing adequate case material for students and ensuring the hospital is not too busy for teaching) and staff wellbeing is an area of frequent and active consideration by the School.
- 4.3 The RG noted valid concerns surrounding burnout and the wellbeing of clinical faculty which were articulated in the SAR by the clinical teams and also by the School's HR partner who had good ideas for support in this area.
- 4.4 The RG found evidence of a strong team dynamic within the hospital with staff supporting each other. On the basis of the tour and conversations with students, they also appeared very happy and engaged when in the hospital. Students also reported feeling like colleagues and being treated as a member of the team.
- 4.5 Evidence was provided in the SAR which suggested that students felt induction to the hospitals was inadequate which was a surprising finding given the strength of student focus on supports within the School.
- 4.6 RG discussions with students during the site visit also suggested a lack of clarity in the understanding of their role during hospital rotations which meant that students found the transition to rotation learning daunting.
- 4.7 Students further noted delays in receiving clinical rotation timetables which complicated arrangements for travel home (particularly for international students), organising paid work (an issue particularly for students at risk from financial distress) and organising extra-mural studies.

Commendations

- 4.8 The RG found a strong sense of inclusion and teamwork across the UCD Veterinary hospital and indeed across the whole school with everyone keen to help each other and work collaboratively. This strong team dynamic and sense of community between the students themselves as well as between staff and students is to be commended.
- 4.9 The RG found the space available for students to be excellent and in particular the culture of providing unrestricted access to many areas is to be commended. For example, the provision of laboratory space for students to support their own learning and to practise diagnostic skills for general practice.

Recommendations

- 4.10 The RG recommend that more explicit attention be given to preparing students for rotation learning in the clinical setting. For example, ensuring that there is an awareness of the role and responsibilities of the students particularly in relation to client communication and history-taking and support and direction is provided for when they will be working independently (i.e. without a resident/ intern or faculty member present).
- 4.11 The RG recommend that the timetable for rotations for both Veterinary Medicine and Veterinary Nursing students is released significantly earlier than currently.

5. Quality of Postgraduate Research Education and Research Activity

General Comments and Context

- 5.1 The quality and quantity of research in the School was demonstrated very clearly by excellent overall metrics for research activity (89% staff research active), quality (Field-weighted citation impact of 1.65) and spread (collaboration evidenced by linkages with either international (45.6% of outputs) or national (30.3%) institutions).
- 5.2 The SAR notes that a number of research supports are available at College level through the College Research Innovation and Impact Group (RII) as well as support at University level through UCD Research, Innovation and Impact and the UCD Clinical Research Centre.
- 5.3 The RG found that pre-application support provided by UCRII for grant writing was noted to be excellent, although post-award support appeared to be under resourced.
- 5.4 The supports provided by the School Research Committee were recognised by faculty and early career researchers as strong.
- 5.5 The SAR notes that the School's research programmes are designed to address key issues including environment, energy, agri-food, health, and the development of evidence-based policy.
- 5.6 The RG found that PhD students were generally very happy with the support and structured nature of their graduate programme. However, they noted that stipends were too low and they either had to work outside their PhD or live quite a distance from the campus at UCD. They recognised that this is a national problem rather than a school issue.
- 5.7 The RG also met with representative residents and students of the Doctor of Veterinary Medical Specialisation (DVMS). The RG found the research and projects described by these students to be very impressive and of a very high standard.
- 5.8 The RG noted that the postdoctoral researchers they met were happy with their research projects, facilities and appreciated the possibility to apply for school seed funding grants to support their projects. However, they noted that they did not always feel they were seen as 'staff' within the School.

- 5.9 The SAR celebrated research successes, for example, the importance of emerging research strengths in the School driven by early career researchers and a number of strategic research appointments which complimented the established areas of research strengths.
- 5.10 The RG found that many schemes and approaches that are being used to support research and researcher development within the School are excellent. For example, the School's strategic research plan and initiatives to strengthen clinical research. The RG found the Irish Clinical Academic Training-2 (ICAT-2) scheme and the links with the (medical) clinical trials units to be also excellent, as well as the provision of study design and statistical support for researchers and faculty.
- 5.11 As is common in the veterinary sector, the RG noted there are particular challenges related to staff time and size of available funding schemes, as well as research experience, in growing significant clinical research programmes. The RG found however that the SAR did not fully articulate the challenges of conducting high quality clinical research.

Commendations

- 5.12 The distribution of School funds, received through the Overhead Investment Plan (OIP) allocation and provided to early career researchers through the Research Committee is excellent, effective and should be celebrated. This to be commended.
- 5.13 The RG commend the quality of significant research groups within the School, including within epidemiology and infectious diseases. This is a global strength for the School and is commendable.
- 5.14 The RG commend the research being conducted in the clinical residency programmes through the linked DVMS registration of the residencies.
- 5.15 The opportunities available for faculty to establish collaborative links and be mentored by highly successful researchers both within the School and other areas across the University is commendable.

Recommendations

- 5.16 The RG noted that the uptake of sabbatical leave by staff in the School is currently low overall, for example only three of the school's staff took sabbatical leave during 2017 to 2022. The RG recommend the School look to ensure greater use of sabbatical leave entitlement for all staff.
- 5.17 The RG noted a sector wide challenge in supporting the research careers of clinicians who may never have held significant research funding, nor have worked in a research group with significant external funding. The RG recommends that the School consider opportunities to match clinicians with internationally recognised research groups, making use of the School's excellent laboratory facilities available both in the School and on the campus (e.g. Conway Institute). Uptake of sabbatical leave by clinicians could then be used to embed time for mentoring and research.
- 5.18 The School noted that it received only one Ad Astra post through the University fellowship programme from the four nominations put forward. The RG recommend the School ensures

it maximises opportunities for success in such schemes by recognising how the broader University rather than the veterinary sector views individuals and success. The RG recommend also that the School takes advice from the College Principal earlier in the nomination process in future Ad Astra calls.

- 5.19 The RG recommends that the School explores with the College how post-grant support for improved grant management could be enhanced.

6. Management of Quality and Enhancement

General Comments and Context

- 6.1 In 2020/2021 the School underwent accreditation process for five accrediting bodies - one national (Veterinary Council of Ireland) and four internationals (American Veterinary Medical Association, Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE) and the Australian Veterinary Boards Council) and has retained full accreditation for a seven year period with all entities noting a number of commendations. Quality assurance is a key part of these accreditations, in particular with EAEVE. The School's participation and success in accreditation processes is evidence of ongoing quality assurance and enhancement.
- 6.2 Accreditation is supported within the School by ongoing, evidence-based changes to the curriculum and with an established Curriculum Review Committee to oversee these curriculum changes.
- 6.3 Student feedback is gathered in a variety of different approaches including end of module surveys, external surveys, student focus groups, representation of students on the Curriculum Review Committee and the Staff-Student Liaison Committee.
- 6.4 Students who met with the RG noted that they found informal feedback provided to individual module coordinators was a useful way of providing feedback. Students also provided examples of when their feedback produced a positive outcome. However, the RG noted that they were less sure of how they could provide feedback under more formal structures and what the impact of that feedback might be.
- 6.5 The RG noted overall, for both staff and students, that there was a sense of survey and feedback fatigue, perhaps as a result of undergoing multiple accreditation processes. Embedding a systematic approach to feedback and clearly explaining the School response to feedback can increase both the quality of feedback and student satisfaction levels. When students feel valued and are incentivised to participate in feedback mechanisms, it helps to combat feedback fatigue. Clearer communication of reasons for decisions made, what is and is not possible and why, helps manage expectations and encourages a 'students-as-partners' approach.
- 6.6 Feedback is sought from stakeholders such as employers via the External Advisory Board on all aspects of the School's activities (see chapter 8 below for further discussions).

- 6.7 The RG noted that an extensive critique of the School's widening participation activities was not evident in the SAR.

Commendations

- 6.8 The School's successful accreditation with one national and four international accrediting bodies is an excellent achievement. The School is one of only seven Veterinary Schools in Europe to be accredited with the American Veterinary Medical Association.
- 6.9 The School is also to be commended on its excellent QS World University Ranking for Veterinary Science in 2018 (24th), 2019 (26th), 2020 (32nd) and 2021 (23rd).
- 6.10 The School is to be commended on the value it places on curriculum change and enhancement and it was evident from the SAR and discussions that a significant amount of reflection and research has informed initiatives for improving the quality of the programmes and how they are delivered.
- 6.11 The inclusion of student representation on the Curriculum Review Committee and the sense of community and inclusion felt by students is to be commended.
- 6.12 The External Advisory Board is an excellent resource for engaging with the wider community and opening up discussions on how the programmes and other activities in the School could be improved. It also ensures that the School is itself an active stakeholder in wider discussions in the veterinary community and is also commendable.

Recommendations

- 6.13 Considerable emphasis is currently placed on day to day interactions with staff where feedback can be provided and while these informal mechanisms are important and reflect the strong sense of community within the School, more formal mechanisms ensure that everyone has an opportunity to be heard and is aware of how to provide feedback. The RG recommend the School develop a systematic framework for student feedback via fora such as Staff-Student Liaison meetings, with an agenda, minutes, clear leadership and clear communication of the School responses to feedback.
- 6.14 The RG recommend the School considers seeking feedback from very recent graduates, to see how their university experience and training has prepared them for their early career, and what challenges they are facing.
- 6.15 The RG recommends that a review and enhancement of widening participation activities within the School is undertaken. As well as review of systems in place to encourage participation a system to track the progress and retention of students might be considered.

7. Support Services

General Comments and Context

- 7.1 The UCD School of Veterinary Medicine avails of significant university support services which are essential to the smooth operation of its educational programmes, its research and the UCD Veterinary Hospital.
- 7.2 As well as supports at College level, many are centralised within the University (including for example UCD Registry, UCD Finance Office, UCD Human Resources, UCD Teaching and Learning, UCD Access and Lifelong Learning, UCD Research, Innovation and Impact, UCD IT Services, UCD Careers Network, UCD Agile, and UCD Global). The School also benefits from having its own specialised services for example, the 'Vet Ed Hub' unit which provides educational technology supports. (see point 3.10 above).
- 7.3 The School also has its own dedicated Student Adviser and it is clear that the supports provided are both necessary and greatly appreciated by both staff and students. The RG found the Student Adviser to be welcoming, inclusive and very aware of the specific support needs of veterinary students, for example, as well as issues relating to stress, those relating to the extra-mural studies placements.
- 7.4 The physical environment of the School has also been positively influenced by the Student Adviser. A visual campaign across the School also makes clear to students what supports are available to them.
- 7.5 There are allocated spaces in the School where students can meet up or relax which is important given the demands of their programme and training. The RG found this further adds to the sense of community within the School.
- 7.6 The School also has its own Library which recently received central university support for a refurbishment. During the site visit it was clear to the RG that this is a valued resource within the School and that students are making good use of the study space provided, including the rooms for group work.
- 7.7 The School has the benefit of an active and dedicated HR Partner with a good understanding of the demands of working in the School and also the wider context of UCD.
- 7.8 The School also has a unique relationship with UCD Estates which provided support in the context of the refurbishment of the Clinical Skills Centre, in development plans for the Herd Health Hub at Lyons Farm and the development of the Small Animal Hospital.
- 7.9 The particular needs of the UCD Veterinary Hospital which is open 24/7 and has particular requirements to ensure the safety and welfare of staff, students, visitors and animals, means that this cooperative relationship with UCD Estates is crucially important.
- 7.10 The RG noted that the UCD Safety, Insurance Operational Risk and Compliance (SIRC) Office and its Director also provide invaluable support to the School and the Veterinary Hospital. The RG found that a collaborative approach is taken to ensure that all necessary measures are

taken to ensure health and safety in the School, including adequate reporting of any incidents that occur. In particular, the School was able to work closely with the UCD SIRC Office during the Covid restrictions to continue providing veterinary services and clinical training at the UCD Veterinary Hospital.

Commendations

- 7.11 The RG commend the excellent support provided by the School's dedicated Student Adviser and the student body greatly benefits from this pastoral care and support.
- 7.12 The School is to be commended for the quality of its engagement with external support services to the School, in particular its ongoing cooperative relationship with UCD Estates and the UCD SIRC Office.
- 7.13 The School's library is a well-used and valuable resource, especially given the demands on students' time. It also provides space for students to study close to where their clinical studies and classes are held.

Recommendations

- 7.14 The RG recommends that the School encourages more uptake among students of courses such as the manual handling training courses which are offered by the UCD SIRC Office. These would be particularly relevant to the School's Veterinary Nursing students.
- 7.15 While the student support within the School is excellent, it is important that the School can provide continued support for students undertaking extra-mural studies. The RG recommend the School reviews its pastoral care to ensure it is sustainable and not over-reliant on a small number of outstanding, yet possibly overstretched key staff.

8. External Relations

General Comments and Context

- 8.1 The RG met alumni and members of the External Advisory Board. These stakeholders were highly engaged and had enthusiastic suggestions for curriculum input, although the RG noted these were not always feasible or appropriate.
- 8.2 These external stakeholders also provided useful feedback on the School's achievements, such as the improvement in communication skills observed in the School's students and graduates.
- 8.3 Feedback is currently sought by the School from placement providers for extra-mural studies. Some employers on the advisory board noted that they were unclear as to what was expected of them on these placements. As already noted in chapter 6 above, the RG also found students likewise to be unclear on what was expected of them on these placements.
- 8.4 During the site visit, the RG were made aware of the media and political discourse surrounding the need for more farm animal vets in Ireland to meet the needs of the sector. The RG had extensive discussions on the topic in several meetings with stakeholders. However, it was clear

from discussions that this impacts not only on the career interests of those entering veterinary schools but also relates to the retention, quality of life and career satisfaction in farm animal practice. The RG acknowledge this is clearly a complex issue and one which the School is engaging with.

- 8.5 Wider external relations (such as with clients, local community, industry partnerships and collaborative rotation partners that were noted in the SAR) did not meet with the RG as part of the review site visit.

Commendations

- 8.6 The External Advisory Board is an excellent and highly valuable concept. The School should continue to build on this relationship, including ensuring that any changes made in response to the Board's suggestions are fed back to the group.

Recommendations

- 8.7 The RG recommends that consideration be given to developing a more structured framework to ensure the ongoing quality of Extra-Mural Studies (EMS) so that both students and providers are supported and clear on what is expected of them and to examine ways in which the system can be improved. While the often-requested skills checklists are typically not appropriate, there may be alternatives that the School could explore that would help the EMS providers know what is expected of them in terms of the outcomes which the students can or would ideally achieve during their placements. This could include providing short, recorded presentations (webinars etc) explaining students' needs during EMS, encouraging students to define their intended learning outcomes prior to EMS placements, or providing online resources that explain the skills, applied knowledge and professional competences that EMS can usefully reinforce.

UCD School of Veterinary Medicine

Response to Review Group Report

The task of developing the Self-assessment Report was a valuable reflective exercise, which allowed the UCD School of Veterinary Medicine (SVM) to review its position from several perspectives, highlight and confirm our strengths and opportunities, identify areas of good practice, and evaluate challenges. The Review Group Site Visit was a positive and constructive experience, conducted with a strong sense of collegiality and professionalism by the Review Group Team. We welcome the endorsement of the Review Group of our activities through commendations and will carefully consider the recommendations during the Quality Improvement Planning process. Throughout the two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to ensuring the optimal delivery of veterinary hospital clinical care, teaching and research, the SVM successfully navigated accreditation of its MVB degree programme by AVMA, RCVS, AVBC, EAEVE and VCI. We believe, that as well as providing an historical context, a mention of the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2022) which preceded this review would be appropriate in the report, given the enormous pressure and strain that this placed on all staff and students.

There was a high level of engagement of all staff categories and from the student community both in compiling the Self-assessment Report and in interacting with the Review Group during the site visit. We wish to thank the Review Group for their time, expertise, and constructive comments, both at the visit and in their helpful Report. We will formulate a plan to address the recommendations in the Quality Review Report and many actions are already underway.

Prioritised Recommendations for Improvement

With specific reference to the prioritised recommendations identified by the Review Group, the School's initial responses are outlined below:

- 1. Recommendation 1:** The RG recommend the School introduce a formal process for staff induction to ensure that all administrative bases are covered for all staff. Consideration should also be given to introducing an informal 'buddy system' as part of the induction. (Recommendation 2.14)

Response:

Work has already begun as part of the School's application for the Silver Athena SWAN award (April 2023). The School's Equality Diversity & Inclusion /Athena SWAN committee has proposed a bi-annual networking event for all new School staff (including all staff categories and postdoctoral staff). The introduction of an informal Buddy or Champion system to guide new staff has also been proposed as actions in the School's Silver Athena SWAN Action Plan. In the UCD Veterinary Hospital, two staff members (an Assistant Professor and Associate Professor) are currently formulating an induction process, with a focus on clinical interns. Based on this pilot programme the School will also broaden the formulation of the induction process to include all School staff in addressing this recommendation.

2. **Recommendation 2:** Several clinical areas are understaffed, as is common in the sector. Many UK universities address this critical issue, in part, through the use of additional payments made to clinical staff, often funded from the commercial income that they effectively bring in through clinical work. In some cases, this is a clinical supplement and in other cases this is through enhanced out of hours payments. The RG recommend the School explore whether such an approach could be developed to provide additional incentives within the UCD system. (Recommendation 2.15).

Response: The SVM has continually made the case to the University for the need to incentivise clinical staff to ensure continued high-level input and retention. This is a particular area of concern in relation to preventing the loss of highly valued staff to the private sector. The out-of-hours pay scales were agreed at the time (circa 2006) with the relevant government department however have not been reviewed for many years; in addition, they relate to being “on call” rather than performing additional clinical work at nights or weekends. As such, the monetary benefits are relatively low. Over the last year, the Dean and the Clinical Director of the Veterinary Hospital have commenced discussions with UCD Finance to seek either enhanced On-Call pay rates, or an additional fee based on the performance of actual clinical duties (e.g., additional pay per hour of surgery). As part of this process, we have also highlighted the option of an agreed clinical supplement as part of the annual salary package, like the case pertaining in some UK Schools of Veterinary Medicine. All these options will need central University financial support. The School has also sought enhanced pay scales for more junior clinical staff (entry-level nurses, residents etc.) who find themselves on narrower pay scale bands. The School uses hospital income to incentivise staff by paying for additional conference attendance, discipline-specific equipment to facilitate clinical research, or advanced CPD (e.g. hip-replacement courses) where justified.

3. **Recommendation 3:** The RG recommend that all school staff who interact with students in an educational capacity should receive education in pedagogy that is relevant to their role. (Recommendation 3.17)

Response: The SVM intends to create an ‘Academic Centre for Veterinary Education’ (an application, with the support of the Dean, College Principal and Vice-President for Research, Innovation and Impact and the School’s Executive Committee has already been submitted to the Academic Council for consideration in Spring 2023). A key objective of this Centre will be to offer CPD in pedagogy relevant to training all School staff in a more structured way.

4. **Recommendation 4:** Considerable emphasis is currently placed on day-to-day interactions with staff where feedback can be provided and while these informal mechanisms are important and reflect the strong sense of community within the School, more formal mechanisms ensure that everyone has an opportunity to be heard and is aware of how to provide feedback. The RG recommend the School develops a systematic framework for student feedback via fora such as Staff-Student Liaison meetings, with an agenda, minutes, clear leadership and clear communication of the School responses to feedback. (Recommendation 6.13).

Response: Student feedback is gathered systematically through the Staff-Student Liaison Committee, the Programme Board, the Curriculum Review Committee (CRC), stage-level focus groups and module feedback surveys.

Student feedback on curriculum (teaching, learning and assessment) is fed into the Curriculum Review Committee (CR) (formally minuted meetings) by Student Representatives from all years who are formal members of the committee. Responses to that feedback are channelled back through those class representatives for dissemination with relevant student cohorts.

In 2022, it was agreed that finalised stage focus group reports are channelled through the CRC where again the student representatives report back to their classes.

The Staff-Student Liaison committee (also formally minuted meetings) manages feedback on more practical day-to-day matters and has the widest participation of staff and students invited. Staff membership includes the Dean, the Student Adviser, Stage Co-ordinators of both veterinary nursing and veterinary medicine as well as representatives from library, estate services and the UCD Veterinary Hospital. Student membership includes representatives from all years from both veterinary medicine and veterinary nursing.

UCD is currently piloting an enhanced Student feedback system on modules and teaching. Our School is keen to enhance student feedback mechanisms available to us, so we are participating in this pilot this trimester.

- 5. Recommendation 5:** The RG recommend a review and enhancement of widening participation within the School. This could include putting in place a system to track progress and retention of students from different backgrounds and review of the systems in place to encourage participation. (Recommendation 6.15)

Response: The School is represented on the UCD Widening Participation committee and reports to the SVM executive and Programme Board. The SVM has a dedicated committee (the School EDI and Athena Swan Committee) to initiate the University for All Implementation Plan of the Widening Participation committee. Establishing an additional access route on grounds of Mature Entry to Veterinary Medicine (DN300) (Sept 2023) will enhance the access cohort to 15 percent, which is a small step towards meeting the target set by the National Plan for Equity of Access to higher education. The widening participation data for our Veterinary nursing program are much above the national and university average. Retention is not an issue for the SVM due to the attrition rates being historically very low. The Vet Athena SWAN committee is currently working on developing approaches to capture data to identify the factors responsible for students leaving the course.

6. **Recommendation 6:** The RG recommend the School encourage more uptake among students of courses such as the manual handling training courses which are offered by the UCD SIRC Office. These would be particularly relevant to the School's Veterinary Nursing students. (Recommendation 7.14)

Response: All veterinary nursing students are required to complete manual handling training in their first year prior to going on placement which is organised externally and the SIRC office is investigating the design of a bespoke manual handling course for students of both veterinary medicine and veterinary nursing.

APPENDIX 2



University College Dublin School of Veterinary Medicine

Quality Review Site Visit Timetable

14 – 17 November 2022

Pre-Visit: Monday 14 November 2022-12-21	
Boardroom 213 Tierney Building, Belfield	
17.00-19.00	RG meet to review preliminary issues and to confirm work schedule and assignment of tasks for the site visit. RG and UCD Quality Office only
19.30	Dinner hosted by the Acting Registrar and Deputy President with RG Group and UCD Quality Office representative
Day 1: Tuesday 15 November, 2022	
UCD School of Veterinary Medicine Board Room	
Time	Meeting
08.30-09.00	Private meeting of Review Group
09.00-09.45	RG meet with Head of School
9.45-10.00	Break
10.00-10.45	RG meet with College Finance Manager and Head of School to outline school's financial situation
10.45-11.00	Tea/Coffee break
11.00-11.30	Heads of Sections meeting
11.30-11.45	Break
11.45-12.45	RG meet with a representative group of postgraduate students (taught and research) and recent graduates (PG and UG).
12.45-13.00	Break – RG review key observations and prepare for lunch time meeting
13.00-14.00	Working lunch– meeting with employers (and/or other external stakeholders)
14.00-14.30	RG review key observations
14.30-15.30	RG meet with the School Research Committee
15.30-15.45	RG Tea/Coffee break
15.45-16.30	RG meet with representative group of Postdoctoral staff
16.30-16.45	Break
16.45-17.15	RG meet with professional administrative staff representatives
17.15-17.30	Break
17.30-18.00	RG meet with technical staff representatives
18.00	RG depart

Day 2: Wednesday 16 November, 2022	
UCD School of Veterinary Medicine Board Room	
Time	Meeting
08.45-09.15	Private meeting of RG
9.15-10.00	RG meet with College Principal
10.00-10.15	Tea/Coffee break
10.15-12.30	Tour of School/Hospital facilities
12.30-12.45	RG Meet with the School Student Advisor
12.45-13.00	Break – RG review key observations and prepare for lunch time meeting
13.00-14.00	Working lunch – meeting with representative group of undergraduate students
14.00-14.15	Break
14.15-15.30	RG meet with representative group of faculty staff – primary focus on Teaching and Learning, and Curriculum issues.
15.30-15.45	Tea/Coffee break
15.45-16.45	RG meet relevant support service representatives of support services: UCD HR, UCD Global, Research Partner , UCD Estate UCD Alumni , UCD Library, UCD Safety, Insurance, Operational Risk and Compliance Office
16.45-17.00	Break
17.00-17.45	RG meet with recently appointed members of staff
17.45-18.15	RG reflect and draft key conclusions/considerations in relation to their section(s) of the report
18.15	RG depart
Day 3: Thursday 17 November, 2022	
UCD School of Veterinary Medicine Board Room	
Time	Meeting
08.30-09.00	Private meeting of RG
9.00-10.00	Additional RG meeting with Head of School to clarify outstanding queries
10.00-10.15	Break
10.15-12.00	RG continue preparing draft RG Report
12.00-12.30	Lunch
12.30-14.00	RG finalise first draft of RG Report and feedback commendations/recommendations
14.00-14.30	RG meet with College Principal & Head of School to feedback initial outline commendations and recommendations
14.30-15.00	Break/Transfer to Lecture theatre 115 VET
15.00-15.30	Exit presentation to <u>all available staff of the</u> summarising the principal commendations /recommendations of the Review Group
15.30	Review Group depart