

Australasian Veterinary Boards Council Ltd

Advisory Committee on the Registration of Veterinary Specialists (ACRVS)

Terms of Reference

1. Purpose of AVBC

The Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC) is the national standards setting body for veterinary education, assessment and professional recognition across Australia and New Zealand. The AVBC plays a critical role in safeguarding the quality and consistency of veterinary practice by:

- Accrediting veterinary schools
- Delivering the Australasian Veterinary Examination (AVE)
- Supporting specialist recognition frameworks
- Working collaboratively with jurisdictional veterinary boards, governments, and the profession
- Assessment of veterinary qualifications and experience for migration purposes, as the assessing authority approved by the Australian Government for the occupation "Veterinarian"

2. Purpose of the ACRVS

The Advisory Committee on the Registration of Veterinary Specialists (ACRVS) supports AVBC's purpose by providing independent, expert advice on the recognition of veterinary specialists across Australia and New Zealand.

ACRVS is responsible for:

- Setting and maintaining standards for specialist recognition for AVBC member boards in Australia and New Zealand
- Assessing applications and determining eligibility for specialist registration
- Assessing quality of programs and determining eligibility of qualifications offered by international specialist bodies
- Advising the AVBC Board on policy matters related to specialist registration, including emerging specialist disciplines and title protection
- Development of new and expedited pathways using risk-based and competency-based approaches
- Monitoring and reviewing the continuing adequacy of specialist standards, including periodic benchmarking against international comparators
- Maintaining a consultative relationship with the Australian and New Zealand College of Veterinary Scientists (ANZCVS) and other relevant bodies on matters affecting specialist training pathways, without ceding decision-making authority to those bodies
- Reporting annually to the AVBC Board on committee activity, recognitions granted, emerging issues, and any public interest observations

3. Scope and Functions

The Committee is responsible for:

- Advising AVBC member registration authorities on matters relating to specialist registration
- Assessing applications for specialist registration against AVBC-approved criteria
- Maintaining and reviewing specialist registration standards and criteria
- Advising on the structure, categories and branches of specialist recognition
- Ensuring consistency, fairness and transparency in decision-making
- Supporting alignment between specialist standards and broader accreditation and competency frameworks

4. Authority

The Committee operates under delegation from the AVBC Board and has authority to:

- Assess and determine outcomes of specialist registration applications in accordance with AVBC-approved criteria
- Develop and recommend specialist registration standards, policies and procedures
- Provide formal advice to AVBC and member Boards on specialist registration matters
- Establish working groups or seek external expert advice where required

Limitations of Authority

The Committee does not have authority to:

- Amend AVBC governance documents or constitutional arrangements
- Approve unbudgeted expenditure outside delegated authority
- Enter into contracts or legally bind AVBC
- Make decisions that materially alter AVBC strategy without Board approval

5. Key Responsibilities

Specialist Registration Assessment

- Receive and assess applications for specialist registration
- Ensure applicants meet AVBC-approved standards and criteria
- Apply consistent, fair and evidence-based decision-making processes

Standards and Criteria

- Periodically review and recommend updates to specialist registration criteria
- Ensure criteria reflect contemporary practice, professional expectations and public interest
- Monitor emerging trends in veterinary specialisation

Advisory Function

- Provide advice to AVBC and member Boards on specialist registration matters
- Recommend appropriate categories and branches for specialist recognition
- Contribute to policy development relating to specialist pathways

Quality Assurance and Integrity

- Maintain consistency and defensibility of assessment decisions
- Ensure confidentiality of applicant information and Committee deliberations
- Seek independent expert advice where required

Reporting

- Provide a report to each AVBC Annual General Meeting
- Provide updates and reports to the AVBC Board and external bodies as required

6. Composition

The Committee shall comprise up to seven (7) members to ensure balanced representation and expertise:

- Independent Chair (appointed by AVBC)
- Regulatory body nominee (registered specialist with an AVBC member regulatory board in Australia)
- Regulatory body nominee (registered specialist with the VCNZ)
- Veterinary specialist education member (registered veterinary specialist with experience in veterinary specialist training programme delivery)
- Up to two At-Large Specialist Practitioners (with no ANZCVS governance role in preceding 3 years)
- Public/consumer interest member (AVBC-appointed, experience with use of veterinary specialist services)

Members should complement a cross-section of specialist qualifications (across major species and subject areas)

Chair

- Provide independent leadership
- Ensure operation within delegated authority
- Facilitate effective meetings and decision-making
- Act as primary liaison with the Board
- Oversee Committee performance
- Escalate risks and issues

Deputy Chair

- Elected by the Committee from among its members
- Support the Chair and at in the Chair's absence
- Provide leadership continuity

Ex-Officio and Support Roles

- CEO (or nominee) – ex-officio (non-voting unless determined by Board)
- AVEC Secretariat – administrative and governance support (non-voting).
- Head of Education (non-voting)
- External advisors – engaged as required

7. Membership Requirements and Capability

Collectively, members must demonstrate:

- Expertise in veterinary specialisation and professional standards
- Understanding of regulatory and accreditation environments
- Experience in assessment or credentialing processes
- Ability to apply objective, evidence-based decision-making

Members must:

- Act in the public interest
- Ensure confidentiality and integrity in all assessment processes
- Declare and manage conflicts of interest
- Be from an AVBC member jurisdiction

8. Appointment and Tenure

- Chair is appointed by the AVBC Board
- Standard term: three (3) years, maximum two consecutive terms
- Extensions permitted in exceptional circumstances
- Staggered appointments encouraged to ensure continuity

9. Meetings

- Meetings held at least once per year. Face to face every other year.
- Quorum: majority of members
- Virtual participation permitted
- Secretariat support provided by AVBC

10. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

Members must:

- Declare actual, perceived or potential conflicts of interest
- Comply with AVBC conflict of interest policies
- Maintain strict confidentiality of applicant information and deliberations
- Ensure decisions are free from bias or undue influence

11. Reporting

The Committee will:

- Provide a report to each AVBC Annual General Meeting
 - Provide copies of reports to nominating organisations
 - Escalate significant issues or risks to the AVBC Board
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12. Review

- Terms of Reference to be reviewed annually and approved by the AVBC Board.