

Australasian Veterinary Boards Council Ltd

Veterinary Schools Accreditation Advisory Committee (VSAAC)

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 VSAAC

The Veterinary Schools Accreditation Advisory Committee (the Committee) supports AVBC's charitable purpose by ensuring that veterinary education programs:

- Produce graduates who are safe, competent and fit for practice
- Align with Day One Competencies and contemporary veterinary practice
- Meet the expectations of regulators, the profession and the community
- Maintain international recognition and comparability

The Committee plays a critical role in safeguarding public trust, professional standards and workforce quality.

3. Scope and Functions

The Committee is responsible for oversight and advice in relation to:

- Accreditation standards development and review
- Accreditation and re-accreditation of veterinary schools
- Assessment of international veterinary programs
- Monitoring outcomes of accredited programs
- Continuous improvement of veterinary education
- Sector insights, trends and workforce alignment

4. Authority

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

- Advise on accreditation standards and education requirements
- Oversee accreditation processes and site visit frameworks
- Assess veterinary schools against approved standards
- Recommend accreditation outcomes (including conditions) to the Board
- Approve composition of accreditation teams
- Establish working groups
- Commission independent expert advice within approved budgets
- Monitor and escalate accreditation-related risks

Limitations of Authority

The Committee does not have authority to:

- Approve final accreditation outcomes (Board responsibility)
- Amend AVBC governance frameworks

- Enter into contracts or legally bind AVBC
- Approve unbudgeted expenditure
- Directly contact external stakeholders to engage in strategic agreements

5. Accreditation Framework

The Committee operates under the AVBC Accreditation Standards, which define:

- Educational outcomes and competencies (including Day One Competencies)
- Institutional requirements
- Clinical training expectations
- Quality assurance and continuous improvement requirements

6. Key Responsibilities

Accreditation Standards and Policy

- Advise on the criteria required for graduates to meet professional and regulatory expectations, with reference to Day One Competencies and contemporary veterinary practice
- Maintain, develop, and evolve accreditation standards, ensuring they are reviewed at intervals not exceeding five years
- Ensure alignment with relevant international accreditation benchmarks, including those of comparable veterinary and health profession accreditation bodies
- Monitor emerging developments in veterinary education, workforce, and regulatory environments that may require revision of accreditation standards

Accreditation and Assessment

- Conduct accreditation and re-accreditation of veterinary schools at intervals not exceeding five (5) years for programs of four years or more in duration or seven (7) years for programs over 4 years duration, where a continuous monitoring framework demonstrates sustained compliance
- Undertake international accreditation assessments in accordance with AVBC policy
- Assess veterinary programs against approved accreditation standards

Accreditation Site Visits

- Constitute and approve appropriately skilled site visit teams for each accreditation assessment, ensuring balanced representation across professional, educational, and community domains

Monitoring and Reporting

- Monitor graduate outcomes and early career performance as a standing indicator of program quality, and escalate concerns to the AVBC Board where patterns of underperformance are identified

Sector Leadership

- Report to each AVBC Board meeting on accreditation activities, emerging risks, and matters requiring Board attention
- Report annually to the AVBC AGM on:
 - Accreditation outcomes across all accredited programs
 - Trends and emerging risks in veterinary education quality
 - Future education and workforce needs identified through accreditation activities
- Advise the AVBC Board on veterinary workforce pipeline implications arising from accreditation outcomes, program changes, or emerging sector trends
- Engage with comparable accreditation bodies domestically and internationally to promote continuous improvement and benchmarking of AVBC accreditation practice

7. Composition

- **Chair** Appointed by the AVBC Board.
- **Practitioner representative (Australia)** A registered veterinarian in active clinical practice in Australia, nominated in consultation with the AVA and member Australian Veterinary boards. Must not hold a primary appointment at an AVBC accredited school.
- **Practitioner representative (New Zealand)** A registered veterinarian in active clinical practice in New Zealand, nominated in consultation with the NZVA and the Veterinary Council of New Zealand. Must not hold a primary appointment at an AVBC accredited school.
- **Veterinary education representative** A person with current or recent experience in veterinary education program design, delivery, or quality assurance. May be employed at an accredited school but must not be Head of School or equivalent at the time of appointment.
- **Higher education governance or quality assurance expert** A person with expertise in Australian higher education standards, institutional quality assurance, or TEQSA-adjacent regulatory frameworks. Need not hold veterinary qualifications.
- **Consumer and public interest representative** A person without veterinary professional qualifications who represents community, patient/animal owner, or public health perspectives. Appointed through an open, merit-based process.
- **Cultural safety expert** A person with demonstrated expertise in the implementation of cultural safety within health or veterinary education curricula, including Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and/or Māori perspectives.

Ex-Officio and Support Roles

- CEO (or nominee) – (non-voting unless determined by Board)
- AVEC Secretariat – administrative and governance support (non-voting).
- Head of Education (non-voting)
- VSAAC Representative - observer only (excluded from confidential accreditation deliberations)
- External advisors – engaged as required

Chair

The Chair must demonstrate:

- Substantial experience in veterinary education, accreditation, or professional regulation;
- Familiarity with Day One Competency standards or equivalent professional competency frameworks;
- Capacity to provide independent academic leadership at a senior level;
- Current or recent experience in governance or quality assurance roles.

The Chair must not be currently employed at a veterinary school holding AVBC accreditation, nor have been so employed within the preceding two years.

Deputy Chair

- Appointed by VSAAC
- Support the Chair and act in the Chair's absence
- Provide leadership continuity

8. Membership Requirements and Capability

Members are appointed on the basis of the skills, knowledge and experience required for their designated role on the Committee. Individual members are not required to demonstrate expertise across all domains. No member is required to hold veterinary professional qualifications unless that is specified for their designated role. Members must be from an AVBC member jurisdiction.

The Committee must collectively demonstrate capability across:

- Veterinary education program design, delivery, or quality assurance
 - Clinical veterinary practice (Australia and New Zealand)
 - Accreditation, standards development, or regulatory frameworks
 - Higher education governance or quality assurance
 - Consumer, community, or public interest representation
 - Cultural safety in veterinary education and practice
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9. 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
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10. Meetings

- Aligned to accreditation cycles
 - Frequency as required (minimum of 2 per annum)
 - Quorum: majority
 - Virtual participation permitted
 - Secretariat provided by AVBC
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11. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

Members must:

- Declare conflicts of interest
 - Comply with AVBC policies
 - Maintain strict confidentiality
 - Adhere to data security requirements
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12. Reporting

- Provide a report to each AVBC Board meeting
 - Provide an annual summary report
 - Escalate material risks or integrity issues immediately
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13. Review

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