

Unit Plan for Assessing and Improving Student learning in Degree Programs

Unit: Veterinary Clinical Medicine

Unit Head approval: David Williams

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SECTION 1: PAST ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Since the 2000 program review the Department of Veterinary Clinical Medicine's Graduate Student Program has been improved through the following strategies:

1. Targeted hiring of clinician/scientists to augment the Department's research base. Examples of these hires include Drs. Dominique Griffon and Wanda Gordon-Evans (Small Animal Surgery), Dr. Tom Graves (Small Animal Medicine), Drs. Tim Fan and Laura Garrett (Oncology), Dr. Mark Mitchell (Specialty Medicine), Drs. John Herrmann, Yvette Johnson and Richard Evans (Community and Public Health), and Drs. Allison and Matthew Stewart (Equine Surgery). Current faculty recruitment efforts involving Equine Medicine and Bio-Imaging positions will continue this process.
2. Assessment and revision of the Department's Graduate Program has been ongoing, through the efforts of the Graduate Program Advisory Committee (GPAC), The VCM Ad Hoc Research Committee and Veterinary Teaching Hospital Research Committee. The GPAC's focus has been the revision and consolidation of the Department's didactic requirements for graduate students, to ensure that the required courses encompass the knowledge base expected of VCM graduates and provide adequate curricular rigor. The Ad Hoc and VTH Research Committees have addressed the mechanisms by which the Teaching Hospital can best support the research and academic objectives of VCM graduate students and researchers.
3. A more formal process of VCM Graduate Student progress review has been implemented, to resolve the program's previous problem with programmatic incompleteness. This involves annual activity report submissions and student participation in an annual seminar series, designed to ensure timely development and execution of graduate research projects. The increased recruitment of clinician/scientists, mentioned above, has also been extremely beneficial to improving completion rates.
4. The Department has recently introduced a non-thesis Masters option, to more adequately address the needs and primary objectives of VCM resident/masters students.
5. A "bench-marking" exercise is currently underway, to gauge the outcome assessment efficacy and scientific rigor of VCM's Graduate Program against those from the Veterinary Colleges of Wisconsin, Cornell University and Colorado State University

SECTION 2: REVISED ASSESSMENT PLAN

(a) PROCESS: Brief description of the process followed to develop or revise this assessment plan.

VCM's Director of Research and Graduate Studies, Dr. Matthew Stewart, has attended the seminar and tutorial series presented by UIUC's Center for Teaching Excellence during the lead-up to this assessment. Dr Stewart has also participated in the activities of the GPAC, VCM and VTH Research Committees, discussed aspects of Departmental outcomes assessment with the Department Head, Dr. David Williams, and has worked with the Veterinary College's Associate Dean for Research, Dr Ned Hahn, and the Research Directors of Veterinary Biosciences and Pathobiology, to compile this assessment plan. The

VCM Section Heads and Principle Investigators of the major research laboratories in the department were consulted for specific information relating to section- or lab-based assessment.

(b) STUDENT OUTCOMES: List Unit's student learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, and attitudes).

Outcome 1. To prepare Masters students to be life-long learners in careers involving specialty clinical practice, teaching, industry, government, or research.

Outcome 2. To prepare Ph.D. students for an academic or research career, able to conduct research both independently and as a team member. Adequate training in planning research projects and writing research proposals will provide the student the ability to function with teams of scientists from various areas of the biomedical or agriculture fields.

Outcome 3. To prepare Clinical Residents for Specialty Board eligibility, examination competency and specialty clinical practice.

(c) MEASURES AND METHODS USED TO MEASURE OUTCOMES:

Outcome Assessments of clinical training:

1. Examinations that follow seminar- and journal-based courses.

2. Assessment of seminar presentations

3. Continual monitoring and oversight of residents during their clinical service. This routinely occurs on a daily basis, during the once- or twice-daily clinical rounds sessions, where case histories, presentations, diagnoses, treatment plans and progress are discussed amongst those responsible for the service (faculty, residents, interns and senior students). This oversight addresses technical aspects of clinical competence along with the knowledge base and thought processes required for clinical expertise.

4. Formal semi-annual or annual reviews of resident performance and progress are conducted by the entire faculty of each service. At these reviews, a consensus of the resident candidate's competence is agreed upon and, in particular, areas requiring improvement are identified and targeted for ongoing training and development. On occasion, these reviews are held as "interventions: if particularly serious deficiencies are identified that need immediate redress.

5. Annual "mock Board examinations" are held, simulating the examination process used by the specialty colleges to assess Diplomate candidates. These exams are particularly focused on the needs of third year residents, who will be sitting the official Board examinations within a few months of the mock exams. However, these examinations provide an excellent opportunity to assess the knowledge base and exam-preparedness of more junior residents in the program.

Outcome Assessments of Graduate Student training

1. Formal examinations of graduate courses

2. Annual presentations

VCM Graduate student seminar series: Participation in this seminar series is mandatory for 1st and 2nd year graduate students. This series provides an incentive to commit to a research mentor and project early in the program, and an opportunity to inform the VCM faculty and student body of the project itself. VCM faculty members and graduate student colleagues also have the opportunity to provide input and suggestions on the research project, the presentation and so on.

Phi Zeta Research day: VCM hosts an annual Phi Zeta Research Day that most residents and VCM grad students participate in.

Advanced Topics in Veterinary Clinical Medicine. Resident/Masters and PhD students participate in clinically oriented seminar series each semester.

Specialist College Scientific meetings: Residents are expected to present the results of their research at the relevant National Specialty meetings.

3. Student Advisory Committee reviews

Each grad student's SAC meets at least annually to assess progress and research outcomes, identify deficiencies in student programs, suggest alterations and improvements and authorize programmatic scheduling. Student progress is documented through the submission of an annual activity and progress report, that is submitted to VCM's GPAC and Department Head.

4. GPAC review

VCM's GPAC reviews the activity of each student on an annual basis, to ensure compliance and adequate progress in the program. Wherever possible, deficiencies and concerns are identified and resolved preemptively through this oversight process.

5. Thesis presentation and committee defense

VCM graduate students are required to present the results of their research in an open forum seminar format and also defend their thesis to the Thesis Committee.

Post-Graduate and Programmatic Assessment

The following indices are monitored to assess the adequacy of the VCM Graduate program as a whole:

1. Successful and timely completion of the graduate program in the context of residency training.
2. Successful publication of findings derived from the graduate research
3. Successful credentialing for Specialty Board examination applications
4. Successful completion of the Specialty Board examinations (Nation-wide, the success rates in these exams are approximately 50%)
5. Quantity and quality of incoming residency/masters applicant pool

We also monitor the following indices from graduates of our program, after they enter the veterinary work force, to ensure that we are training competitive and motivated graduates:

1. Professional placement and success of VCM graduates after graduation
2. VCM graduates taking veterinary academic appointments
3. VCM graduates participating in annual Specialty College Scientific conferences.
4. VCM graduate research and publication records after graduation

SECTION 3 : PLANS FOR USING RESULTS

(a) PLANS: Brief description of plans to use assessment results for program improvement.

The programmatic review of VCM graduate student training will be ongoing, in concert with a College-wide assessment of the veterinary PhD programs, the development of a Translational Research concentration in the College and the expansion of the Veterinary Medical Scholars (combined DVM/PhD) Program.

Maintenance and development of resident/graduate student training opportunities within VCM will reflect the state-wide and national needs for specialist clinicians in the various disciplines administered by the national specialty colleges, and the recruitment of clinician/research faculty to support these programs.

VCM-based graduate-level courses are being developed to fill the didactic needs of our graduate program, as identified by recent committee reviews.

(b) TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

VCM's programmatic review process will be completed by May 2009.

The current recruitment negotiations, involving faculty in Equine Medicine, Bio-Imaging and Endocrinology/Serology will likely be completed by August 2008.

VCM graduate courses in Evidence-based Medicine and Clinical Statistics will be implemented by August 2008. VCM graduate courses in Pathophysiology of Critical/Emergency Care will be available for enrollment by January or August 2009.

The bench-marking exercise, mentioned above will be completed by the end of 2008 and will provide a basis for a Department-wide evaluation and development plan for the Graduate program.

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