

Standards

V.4

September 27, 2025



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Preamble

This document outlines standards required for accreditation and describes the accreditation procedures. It complements the internal rules and the statutes, which describe the guiding principles for administering the organisation. Any information in those documents will not be repeated here.

Definitions

- **Course:** In this document, the term “course” refers to any type of continuing professional development (CPD) or continuing veterinary education (CVE) event or programme, eg. courses, live events, conferences, webinars, or specialist training.
- **Short course:** An educational event of less than 5 contact hours of teaching.
- **Providers:** Any person or organization that organizes courses. VetCEE considers for accreditation events submitted by various types of course organizers, such as individual veterinary specialists, universities or faculties, or commercial CPD providers.
- **Instructor:** Any kind of teacher, presenter or lecturer participating in teaching a course.

Accreditation criteria for courses

To support high quality continuing veterinary education, VetCEE has set the following minimum standards for accreditation of educational events and other activities (later *course*).

An accredited course fulfills all the following criteria:

1. Basic information

The information provided in the application is complete, adequate, and adhered to during the course. It includes the following:

- title of the course, date(s) and a clear description of the course, specifying the nature of the course (course, conference, or short course of less than 5 hours);
- course topic and animal species, teaching language, hours of theoretical contact time, hours of practical contact time, hours of self-study, and number of credits;
- target audience and possible prerequisites;
- expected total number of participants and the instruction level of the course is identified within the European Qualification Framework (EQF), with levels 7 and 8 in the EQF system corresponding to courses directed toward veterinary graduates and specialists, respectively.
 - If content spans a variety of levels (e.g. a conference) you should indicate the level of the typical content, not the highest level. Specialist conferences are delivered at level 8.
 - The level of credit should be one level higher than the existing qualification of delegates; veterinary surgeons have already completed a level 6 qualification, therefore their next achievement would be a level 7 qualification and courses should be aligned to that level.
 - **Level 6** credits would be awarded to veterinary undergraduates or graduates of a non-veterinary degree (e.g. bachelor's in veterinary nursing).
 - **Level 7** credits would be awarded to courses aimed at veterinary surgeons working towards a 'middle tier' of post-graduate training.
 - **Level 8** credits would be awarded to courses aimed at veterinary surgeons working towards specialist qualifications, e.g. residents, or those who already have a specialist qualification.



2. Educational quality

2.1. Purpose of the course

The course fulfills a defined educational purpose or need. A needs assessment has been performed and the purpose for delivering the course is described in the application.

2.2. Target audience

The course is directed at a suitable target audience.

2.3. Level of instruction

The level of instruction corresponds to the purpose of the course and the level and prerequisites of the target audience.

2.4. Organizer and instructor qualifications

The organizing committee and instructors and their qualifications are described in the application.

The qualifications and expertise of the course instructors are appropriate and sufficient for the level of instruction and the course content.

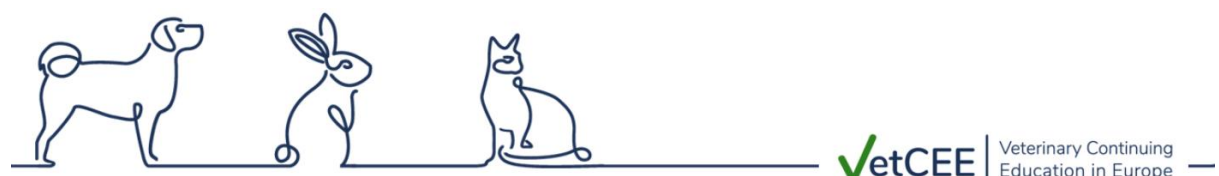
European or American board-certified Diplomates, or experienced veterinary surgeon and educational expert of similar level (e.g. a veterinarian that is a Fellow of the Academy of Medical Educators, Senior Fellow of Advanced Higher Education or the American equivalent) are automatically approved. For instructors with other qualifications (such as post-graduate certification, PhD, or residents in training) a CV or additional information is generally required to demonstrate competency in their field of instruction.

The number of instructors is adequate to meet the educational needs and to achieve the learning outcomes, in both theoretical and practical sessions.

2.5. Intended learning outcomes

Learning outcomes are statements that describe what participants are expected to learn on a course. They refer to specific knowledge or skills that the participant will master after the course and combines an active verb with a specific skill. Example: *“After the course, the participant will be able to interpret clinical chemistry data”*.

The learning outcomes of accredited courses are defined based on the learning needs of the target audience. The teaching and learning activities correspond to the learning outcomes and assessment, and with the level of instruction (EQF level). The purpose of the course and



the learning outcomes are consistently communicated to the participants, and the method of communication is described in the application.

In the application, the organizer describes the learning outcomes of the course, with approximately 5-10 learning outcomes for each European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) equivalent credit. Individual lectures or other sessions have further, more specific, learning outcomes, but these need not be described in detail in the application. For short courses, the learning outcomes are generally fewer than in larger programmes.

For short courses, less than 1 day in duration

- Learning outcomes can be brief and generalized for the entire period, session by session outcomes are not normally required, for example, *“the participants should be able to*
 - *explain the concepts of*
 - *apply the concepts of* *to every day clinical practice*
 - *undertake*
 - *confidently approach cases of*”

For 1-2 day long courses

- Learning outcomes can be provided for session by session or for the entire course (if covering a single subject).
- Learning outcomes must match the taxonomy of the learning level.

For multi-day or modular courses with self-study material

- Session by session learning outcomes should be available for participants; in larger modular programme applications, learning objectives are outlined per module
- Learning outcomes should be defined for the self-study material
- Self-study materials and requirements should be described with justifications on credit calculations for the self-study content
- Learning outcomes must match the taxonomy of the learning level

For conferences

- Session titles should be descriptive
- The level of each session should be identifiable to participants where multiple streams run concurrently (e.g. specialist, generalist, nurse)
- Congress committee members are responsible for ensuring that speakers understand the level and content of each session and for preventing un-planned duplication of content.
- Outcomes for attendance should can be generalized for example
 - *“Be able to describe the latest best practice in the field (level 6)*
 - *Be able to describe the latest innovations in the field (level 7)*
 - *Be able to describe the latest science based advances in the field (level 8)”*



2.6. Scope, workload, and number of credits

Teaching of the content at the level of the intended EQF level and learning outcomes is achievable within the time frame of the course and corresponds to the number of credits.

The programme of the course is submitted with the application, together with the number of educational hours per day and for the whole course.

Allocation of credits:

- The provider awards participants credits for every 25-30 hours of learning, as described by the ECTS User's guide. These credits are equivalent to ECTS credits in content hours and quality requirements. Providers that are certified by the Education Quality Accreditation Commission (EQAC) can issue official ECTS credits. VetCEE accredits courses but does not issue any credits and does not process or store any participant data.
- The hours of learning includes all forms of learning activities (e.g. contact teaching, self-study, exam preparation).
- When using self-study content, the provider should be able to demonstrate how engagement in this material will be measured. Unguided self-study hours are limited to 10% of the total number of hours, and are justified by and relevant to the intended learning outcomes.

2.7. Learner engagement

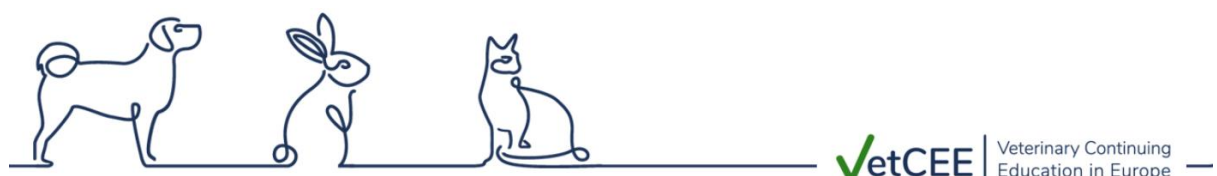
The teaching and learning activities are engaging and supportive of systematic and active learning. The active learning methods are described in the application, and support the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Attendance is monitored, and the monitoring method is described in the application.

2.8. Assessment

Assessments can be used to encourage participant engagement and learning. The assessment method is appropriate and suitable for its purpose and corresponds to the learning outcomes and teaching methods.

The provider describes the procedure in case of a participant failing an assessment or not completing the course.



2.9. Feedback

A reliable and effective means for the participants to provide feedback on the course is provided and described in the application. The collected feedback is submitted to VetCEE upon request.

2.10. Scientific quality

The course is of high scientific quality, and the programme is scientifically balanced and free from bias. The course provides an evidence-based approach to the subject of the course.

3. Content

Requirements regarding the content of an accredited course:

3.1 Target audience and relevance

The content should be relevant and useful to the target audience.

3.2 Educational need

The subject of the course, its learning outcomes and content correspond with the current needs of the particular field of expertise.

3.3 Evidence-based medicine

The content corresponds to current evidence-based practice in the particular field.

3.4 Content alignment with learning outcomes

The content corresponds to the intended learning outcomes and allows the participants to achieve the learning outcomes.

3.5 Level of instruction

The level of instruction should match the EQF levels of the target audience and purpose of the course. Levels 7 and 8 in the EQF system correspond to a Master's or Licentiate degree, and specialization and doctoral degrees, respectively.



3.6 Instructor qualifications

The qualifications and expertise of the course instructors are appropriate and sufficient for the level of instruction and the course content. The number of instructors is acceptable to meet the educational needs and to achieve the learning outcomes.

4. Animal welfare and ethical use of animals in education

Animal welfare and ethical use of animals in education are essential, and animal welfare regulations and standards of at least EU legislation level are strictly adhered to on all VetCEE accredited courses. The use of live animals is avoided whenever possible and providers must be able to show relevant ethical approvals when requested.

5. Compliance with ethical and legal requirements, confidentiality

The course is conducted in compliance with all relevant ethical, regulatory, legal, and industry-based requirements. The course provider respects and confirms the privacy and confidentiality of the learner and adheres to the European General Data Protection Regulation (<https://gdpr-info.eu/>), and confirms that any information provided by the learner will only be utilized for the specific purposes of completing the course. The course adheres to the [European Accessibility Act](#).

6. Environmental sustainability

VetCEE recognizes the potential environmental impact of CPD, including travel, printing and promotional gifts from sponsors or exhibitors. VetCEE encourages providers to reduce environmental impacts actively, and provider policies to ensure environmental sustainability of courses can be described in the course application.

7. Equality and diversity statement

VetCEE is committed to advancing the veterinary profession by promoting equality and diversity, and preventing discrimination in all of its activities. Providers are expected to recognize and eliminate practices and structures that create or sustain inequality. Speakers should be selected based upon expertise and without bias.

8. Commercial influence and bias

Courses must be free from undue commercial influence, advertising, or bias. Courses organized entirely by industry are not considered for accreditation, but course sponsorship can be accepted as unrestricted educational grants or support. Sponsorship may be briefly acknowledged in the course material, but the difference between marketing and education should be evident. The source of all funding should be declared in the application and to the participants.



9. Conflict of interest

Conflicts of interest are disclosed by course providers, organizers and VetCEE evaluators, and how any conflict of interest has been resolved is described in the application for accreditation.

VetCEE Procedures

1. Eligibility

VetCEE will accredit any type of veterinary CPD/CVE that fulfills the described criteria. Providers may be e.g. individual professionals, commercial education programme providers, national statutory bodies, associations, faculties, or universities.

Courses are directed toward veterinarians, at either general practice (corresponding to EQF 7) or specialist levels (EQF 8).

The method of delivery should be appropriate to the purpose of the course and its learning outcomes, but may consist of live and/or e-learning methods.

2. Confidentiality

Submitted applications and all attached materials are strictly confidential.

3. Applying for accreditation

The recommended time for submission of an application is 16 weeks from the planned start date of the course. The latest date for receipt of an application and confirmed payment of the VetCEE fee is 12 weeks before the planned start date of the course.

The provider creates an account on the [VetCEE website](#), and completes the application on the VetCEE application portal.

Once an account is created, it is approved on the VetCEE accreditation platform.

4. Course evaluation

4.1 Evaluators

Recognized experts with specific competencies in different fields of veterinary medicine can apply to become external VetCEE evaluators, by filling in an application on the [VetCEE website](#). The applications are assessed and approved or declined by the VetCEE Experts in education. Evaluators are contacted to evaluate applications for courses in their specific field of expertise. The identity of the external evaluator is not disclosed to course providers.

4.2 The evaluation process

The course evaluation process begins when the application has been submitted and the payment has been received. Payment is non-refundable.

4.3 Evaluation of educational quality, ethical use of animals, and quality control

The general educational quality and ethical use of animals of each course is evaluated by VetCEE Experts in Education, who then assign each application to one or two suitable external evaluators. The quality evaluation is based on the General principles and Essential criteria described in the previous section.

VetCEE will randomly perform on-site quality controls of accredited courses to ensure compliance with the accreditation criteria and information provided in the application.

4.4 Evaluation of course content (external review)

The external evaluator assesses the content of the course according to the VetCEE standards on the evaluation portal. The evaluator will then accredit the event, ask for additional information or clarification, or deny accreditation. The evaluation should be completed within three to four weeks.

4.5 Decision

If the criteria are fulfilled, VetCEE will decide to accredit the course. If all criteria are not fulfilled, VetCEE may ask for additional information or clarification or deny accreditation, if amendments are not possible or adequate.

If a course is repeated without modifications, the accreditation is valid for five years.

Accreditation will be denied if industry funding or other conflicts of interest are not declared, the applicant attempts to influence the decision, or the applicant advertises VetCEE accreditation before accreditation is granted.



Unauthorized or inappropriate use of the VetCEE accreditation status or logo will result in action being taken by VetCEE, and rejection of any future application by the provider.

Significantly inaccurate attendance declarations or failure to declare significant modifications of courses to VetCEE and reapply, will lead to rejection of the application and any future applications.

4.6 Feedback

After the event, the organizer will submit an event report based on feedback from the participants, and this report will also be sent the evaluators.

VetCEE can perform on-site quality control visitation of accredited events to ensure compliance with VetCEE accreditation criteria and submitted information.

4.7. Withdrawal or Modification of Accreditation

VetCEE reserves the right to withdraw, suspend, or modify the accreditation of a course under the following, but not limited to, circumstances:

- Undeclared modifications: If significant changes are made to the content, structure, delivery method, instructors, or intended learning outcomes of an accredited course without prior notification to VetCEE or without reapplication for accreditation.
- Incorrect or misleading use of accreditation: If the VetCEE accreditation status, name, logo, or badge is used incorrectly, outside the approved scope, or in a misleading manner.
- Quality concerns: If new information, participant feedback, or quality control inspections indicate that the course no longer meets the VetCEE standards.
- Provider misconduct: If VetCEE identifies conflicts of interest, undeclared funding sources, or inappropriate influence affecting the impartiality or scientific quality of the course.
- Errors in accreditation: If VetCEE identifies substantive mistakes in the original evaluation or accreditation decision.

In the event of withdrawal or suspension, the provider will be notified in writing with the reasons for the decision. The provider must immediately cease use of the VetCEE name, logo, and badges in all promotional materials and communications for the affected course(s).

5. Appeal process

Written appeals can be submitted to VetCEE (apply@vetcee.eu) within 30 days of the date of the accreditation decision.

5.1. Eligibility to Appeal

Providers may appeal a VetCEE decision if they believe that the decision was made in error or if they have new evidence that was not available at the time of the original decision.

5.2. Appeals Process

1. Submission of Appeal:

- Providers must submit a written appeal to VetCEE within 30 days of receiving the accreditation decision.
- The appeal should include:
 - A clear statement of the grounds for the appeal.
 - Any supporting documentation or evidence.
 - Contact information for the provider.

2. Acknowledgment:

- Upon receipt of the appeal, VetCEE will acknowledge it in writing within 5 business days.

3. Review Process:

- The appeal will be reviewed by an independent panel consisting of members not involved in the original decision-making process.
- The panel will assess the appeal based on the provided documentation and may request additional information from the provider if necessary.

4. Decision:

- The panel will reach a decision and communicate it to the provider in writing within 30 days of receiving all necessary information.
- The decision may uphold, modify, or overturn the original accreditation decision.

5. Finality:

- The decision made by the appeals panel is final. There are no further avenues for appeal within VetCEE.

6. Confidentiality

- All appeals will be handled confidentially, and information will only be shared with individuals directly involved in the appeals process.

6. Quality assurance policy

The VetCEE quality assurance policy is available on the VetCEE website (www.vetcee.eu).

7. Trusted provider status

VetCEE recognizes CE providers that consistently submit high quality programmes as VetCEE Trusted Providers.

Trusted Providers will be granted a 30% discount on the per credit accreditation fee, and receive a Trusted Provider badge.

Trusted Provider status is valid for 1 calendar year, if a provider complies with the following requirements:

- The CE provider successfully delivers at least three VetCEE accredited programmes of outstanding quality per calendar year.
- The CE provider informs VetCEE on changes in accredited programmes or speakers.
- The CE provider annually submits feedback from participants and plans to address any deficiencies in programmes to VetCEE. Course feedback is due on December 31 each calendar year to enable renewal of trusted provider status for the following year. If new accreditation applications are submitted during this year, renewal for a second year is again possible, but contingent on participant feedback at the end of the calendar year.

8. Discount policy

Courses with similar structure but different content can be given a 30% discount on the per credit fee, provided only content review for the subsequent courses is needed.

Trusted providers will be granted a 30% discount on the per credit accreditation fee. Further discounts with the approval of the president/treasurer/CEO.

8. Policy on use of the visuals

8.1 Name

The name 'VetCEE' is protected by a trademark and a collective mark.

8.2 Logo and badges

The use of the VetCEE logo and awarded badges is strictly limited to accredited courses within the time of badge validity. Unauthorised use of logos and badges will lead to legal consequences and prohibits any future accreditation.

