11th Meeting of the ZEvA Commission on November 10, 2020

Reference Number I-1821-1

Study Programme	Degree	Programme Duration	Type of Programme	Maximum annual intake
Veterinary Medicine	Specialist	5 years	Full time, part time, distance mode	17

Accreditation contract signed on: January 29, 2020

Date of digital site visit: June 25, 2020

Expert Panel:

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Prof. Dr. Christiane Pfarrer

University of Veterinary Medicine Hannover, Department of Anatomy, Professor for Anatomy

Prof. Dr. Viktor Stepanishin

Moscow Veterinary Academy named after K.I. Scriabin, Assistant to the Rector, Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Associate Professor of the Department of Animal Anatomy and Histology, Candidate of Biological Sciences

Dr. Christine Montag (representative of the profession)

Veterinary Surgery Dr. Montag und Dr. Seger – Veterinary, Veterinaries Without Borders – Executive Board

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Hanover, 17 November 2020

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I. Vote of the Expert Panel and Decision of the Accreditation Commission

1. Decision of the ZEvA Commission (ZEKo)

The ZEvA Commission follows the experts' report and recommendations and takes note of the university's response.

The Commission decides to accredit the following degree programme as offered by the Peoples' Friendship University Moscow with the conditions listed below:

> ➢ *Veterinary Medicine (Russian degree: Specialist, Equivalent to Master's degree)*

The accreditation of the study programmes is valid for a period of six years.

This decision is based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), the Framework of Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area and the recommendations of the ECTS Users' Guide as referred to in the ZEvA Manual for the External Assessment of Study Programmes.

Conditions:

1. *The Grading Table, which is used to translate national Russian grades into ECTS grades, has to be adapted to most recent standards.*

2. *The Diploma Supplement has to be adapted to most recent standards.*

3. *The ECTS-Creditpoints, which are awarded throughout the curriculum, are not linked to a coherent workload. One ECTS-Creditpoint has to correspond to 27 hours/36 academic hours as prescribed in internal regulations of RUDN.*

2.	Experts' Appraisal

2.1.	Executive Summary

The experts have no doubt that the programme in Veterinary Medicine imparts skills and knowledge at Master's level. In particular, students are provided with sound theoretical knowledge. Due to its close cooperative ties with the local veterinary clinics and laboratories the programme opens excellent career prospects for graduates on the Russian market. The students benefit from a high-quality learning environment and dedicated teaching staff, and their needs are tended to in the best possible way.

Nonetheless, from the experts' point of view the programme does not yet entirely live up to its own goals. In particular, the international profile of the programme needs further strengthening, and the curriculum could benefit from more practical elements and a more densely organized schedule.

Moreover, the ECTS credit points awarded in the programme should be checked for plausibility. To this end, an adequate quality assurance tool needs to be developed.

2.2.	Final Vote of the Expert Panel

The expert panel recommends the accreditation of the study programme *Veterinary Medicine* as offered by *People's Friendship University, Moscow* for a period of six years.

Recommendations:

➢ The experts recommend further sharpening the international profile of the programme. English should be used more frequently in class, and both outgoing and incoming student mobility should be more strongly supported, as, for example, by offering more internship placements abroad.

➢ Learning agreements between sending and receiving institution should be closed in due time in order to facilitate the recognition of study results abroad for outgoing students.

➢ The university should more intensely promote the implementation of its quality assurance tools at programme level. This applies especially to course evaluation, which should be more frequently applied and more strongly formalized.

➢ The experts strongly recommend introducing a close and regular monitoring of student workload at programme and/or class level as a standard quality assurance tool.

➢ The topic of Animal Welfare should be more effectively integrated into the curriculum. To this end, more faculty with expertise in this field should be hired.

➢ The experts highly recommend more hands-on experience in the form of clinical training, field work, laboratory classes and excursions integrated in the curriculum. The practical training should ideally comprise agriculture and husbandry, clinical treatment,

2 Assessment of the Study Programme

veterinary public health, food hygiene and abattoirs. Individual clinical training on all relevant small and large animals under supervision of academic staff should be conducted. 40 to 50 ECTS should be dedicated to practical experience in the curriculum.

➢ The experts highly recommend publishing all key information on the programme, including the intended learning outcomes, assessment regulations and career prospects in Russian, English and in other relevant languages on the RUDN website.

➢ The experts recommend to strengthen the presence of the international office on campus. This might take place in the form of international student fairs of public information sessions.

Conditions:

➢ The Grading Table, which is used to translate national Russian grades into ECTS grades, has to be adapted to most recent standards.

➢ The Diploma Supplement has to be adapted to most recent standards.

➢ The ECTS-Creditpoints, which are awarded throughout the curriculum, are not linked to a coherent workload. One ECTS-Creditpoint has to correspond to 27 hours/36 academic hours as prescribed in internal regulations of RUDN.

II. Evaluation Report of the Expert Panel

Introduction: Purpose, Design and Context of the Accreditation Procedure

In the winter of 2019, People's Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University) mandated ZEvA with the international accreditation of the study programme in Veterinary Medicine, leading up to the degree "Specialist". The assessment procedure was to be jointly organized by ZEvA and the Russian quality assurance agency AKKORK. Beforehand, ZEvA consulted EQAR, whether the Russian "Specialist"-degree can be accredited under the premise of the two-tier-system applied in the European Higher Education Area.

For the purpose of assessing the study programme, the university was asked to submit a self-report in English including an appendix of documents, as e.g. selected course syllabi, CVs of teaching faculty, central statistical data, relevant formal regulations and policies as well as sample questionnaires for course evaluation. All documents were translated into English before submission.

For the purpose of the assessment, an international expert panel was assembled. Due to the travel restrictions imposed by the Corona pandemic, ZEvA and AKKORK jointly decided to conduct a virtual site visit in June 2020.

The site visit involved talks with the Vice Rector for Educational Activities, the director of the Department of Veterinary Medicine, the Director of the Department of Educational Programs, as well as teaching faculty, students and graduates of the programmes. Also, the experts were given a digital tour of the laboratories and equipment at RUDN.

The quality assessment was conducted based on the ZEvA Manual for the External Assessment of Study Programmes. The assessment framework laid out there was developed with close reference to the "European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG)" (ENQA 2015), the "Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area" (2005) and the "ECTS Users' Guide" (European Communities, 2015).

This accreditation report is based on the experts' assessment of the self-report and the outcomes of the virtual talks and will serve as a basis for the final accreditation decision of the ZEvA Commission. Provided the decision is positive, ZEvA will award its quality seal for a limited time period, after which the university can apply for re-accreditation of the programme. The report will be published on the ZEvA website upon finalization.

The experts would like to thank the Vice Rector for Educational Activities, the director of the Department of Veterinary Medicine, the Director of the Department of Educational Programs, as well as the teaching faculty, students and graduates of RUDN for the open and constructive atmosphere during the digital talks.

1.   General Aspects

1.1.   Profile and Mission of the University

Peoples' Friendship University (RUDN University) was founded in 1960, with the prime goal of providing higher education to students from developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, as well as to Russian students from low-income families. The university is located in Moscow, with an additional branch in Sochi.

Still today, internationality and multi-culturality lie at the heart of the university's profile and mission: students from 150 countries are currently enrolled at RUDN University. The university (slogan: "Discover the World in One University!") is co-operating with more than 250 foreign universities and research centres worldwide and offers a wide variety of foreign-language Master's programmes.

This strong international orientation also becomes apparent in the strategic aims that the university names for the period from 2018 to 2020 (cf. self-report, p. 4):

- *To increase the contribution of RUDN University to the development of human capital for solving regional and global problems of humanity in the fields of innovation and infrastructure, urban development, energy, sustainable development, linguistic and civilizational problems of modern society and healthcare;*

- *To strengthen the position of RUDN on the world stage as the most international university in Russia*

- *Significantly expand the presence of the university in the global digital socio-cultural and educational environment*

- *To strengthen the integration of the new brand of RUDN University into the international space.*

In 2012 RUDN University was authorized to develop and apply its own educational standards in addition to the national standards. As the third university in Russia, RUDN University also gained the status of an autonomous university in 2014. As such, RUDN University can take independent management decisions on strategic, administrative and financial matters.

The university presently counts a total of around 33.000 students from more than 150 countries. RUDN University offers educational programmes (mainly Bachelor's, Master's and Ph.D. programmes) in all the subject disciplines of a classical university, including Humanities and Social Sciences, Medicine, Engineering & Technology, Agriculture, Languages and Media, Economics and Management.

Organizational Structure

According to the website, RUDN University hosts six faculties and 9 institutes, complemented by the Academy of Engineering as an independent organizational unit.

The university is headed by one Rector and 12 Vice-Rectors with different areas of responsibility, including the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs. The most important collegial body at central level is the Academic Council, consisting of the members of the Rectorate, the President of the University, the heads of the faculties and institutes as well as elected representatives of

the students and staff. The Academic Council is responsible for the general strategic management of the university, which includes the provision of quality educational services.

Furthermore, a Supervisory Board and a Fiduciary Board function as the main advisory bodies of the university. Various external stakeholders are represented in the boards, as e.g. state authorities, employers and graduates.

The Student Council is the umbrella organization that unites all student associations and committees under one roof. It represents and protects the interests of all RUDN students and ensures sufficient student participation in the general management and governance of the university. It also deals with student appeals and organizes extracurricular activities.

The Agrarian and Technological Institute came into existence in 2015 as part of an internal reorganization process resulting in the dissolution of the former Agrarian Faculty. It currently hosts about 1.600 students from 65 countries. The Institute is involved in several study programmes, including seven Master's programmes, three of which are taught in English and four in Russian, and one Ph.D. programme taught in English. The academic disciplines covered include, for example, Agronomy, Economics, Land Management and Cadastres, as well as Agricultural Science, Zootechnics and Veterinary Medicine.

Experts' Appraisal

From the experts' point of view, the mission and profile of People's Friendship University are described very clearly on the university website and in the self-report. The university holds a unique position among Russian higher education institutions, especially as far as the aspect of internationality is concerned.

With a view to that, it seems somewhat surprising that the study programme "Veterinary Medicine" which the university selected for international accreditation does not show a particularly international profile. The programme is offered in both Russian and English. It is primarily directed at Russian students, though international students can choose the English study path. Employment prospects for graduates are primarily located on the Russian labour market. Outgoing student mobility, if at all, only plays a minor role, which may partly be due to the fact that some students are already working next to their studies, the majority of them in the field of Veterinary Science. In this respect the programme is not representative of the university and its strategic goals. Hence, the experts recommend further sharpening the international profile of the programme. For example, the Institute should consider introducing compulsory courses on "English as a Foreign Language" to the curriculum, or at least increasing the number of courses taught in English in the regular curriculum in order to facilitate outgoing mobility and to generally enrich the study experience (cf. Chapter 2.3). Moreover, foreign lecturers could be integrated into Faculty in order to deliver more classes in English. This might take place in the form of online lectures.

The organizational structure of the university is laid out in sufficient detail in the self-report. The experts especially commend RUDN University on the various options for students to participate in university governance and quality assurance. As far as the experts can see, all internal and external stakeholders are sufficiently represented in the internal governance structure of the university. This was also reflected in the high level of identification of the students with RUDN University which was expressed during the digital talks.

1.2.   Student Support Services

RUDN University has described its advisory and support structures for students in detail in its self-report. Services include special tutoring and mentoring for first-year students and international students.

According to the self-report, the Department of Social Development (DSD) is, among other things, responsible for the integration of students with disabilities and has set up a hotline to provide advice on issues related to inclusive education.

RUDN University ensures that students with physical impairments receive equal access to learning resources at the library. Some of the dorms and lecture rooms are equipped to fit the special needs of disabled students. Also, special conditions may apply to them during examinations and in the process of student admission and selection.

A career center (Department of Students' Practices and Employment Organization) supports students in finding internship placements and working positions upon graduation. As was mentioned in the self-documentation and the virtual talks, the Department of Veterinary Medicine is well linked with a wide network of Veterinarian clinics and laboratories in Moscow and beyond and can thus support students in finding internship placements and jobs.

Students may always approach their tutors and academic advisors in all academic matters. In addition to that, the tutors also provide assistance in other questions linked to studying at RUDN. Furthermore, there are tutors in the dorms who provide special assistance to international students. Moreover, foreign students may turn to the "Foreign Students Recruitment and Support Department" for advice.

The students and graduates interviewed during the site visit reported that as a general rule, lecturers were accessible and supportive throughout. The teaching staff mentioned that consultation hours were offered twice a week in addition to regular teaching hours.

To create equal opportunities for students and applicants, RUDN University offers various scholarships, including financial support for incoming foreign students and for RUDN students who wish to study abroad. The support of Russian student usually depends on their high school results and university grades. An international office is in place to provide incoming and outgoing students with further assistance.

Due to the Corona crisis, the usage of online learning has intensified at RUDN. Even before the pandemic, the so-called Telecommunication Education and Information System (TEIS) had been used at RUDN in order to facilitate access to learning materials for all students. According to the self-report, especially students with physical impairments and distance students benefit from this service. Moreover, information about students' assessment and upcoming exams is provided online. Online seminars are conducted via TEIS. The TEIS, based on Moodle, thus supports students in their individual study paths and enables them to continue their studies under the circumstances of limited physical mobility.

The experts have gained the overall impression that RUDN University has implemented comprehensive and efficient support structures for its diverse student body. Students with special needs are offered a broad range of services and activities to help them integrate into university life and to make good progress in their studies.

The interviews revealed the students' desire for more financial support such as scholarships

for international internships. Moreover, the experts gained the impression that the students had little knowledge about the services offered by the international office. The panel thus <u>recommends</u> to strengthen the presence of the international office on campus through for example international student fairs of public information sessions.

The new challenges in teaching and learning induced by the Corona crisis appear to be met appropriately.

Lecturers appear to be very dedicated and always ready to provide advice to students whenever needed. Furthermore, the student organizations may be approached for appeals, requests and complaints of any kind.

1.3. Student Mobility and Recognition of Credits

According to the self-report, RUDN has closed numerous cooperation agreements with universities all over the world. Agreements relate to the regular exchange of staff and/or students or to the joint development of educational programmes (double degree programmes), of which RUDN University offers about 100. The university also actively participates in the Erasmus+ mobility programme.

The total number of students who participated in academic mobility programmes in 2018 lies at around 1300, with an equal share of incoming and outgoing mobility. Most incoming students are currently from China. International degree-seeking students usually participate in a one-year preparatory year in which they acquire the necessary language skills.

RUDN University has gradually implemented ECTS in its study programmes since the year 2005. All graduates from Bachelor's and Master's programmes receive a Diploma Supplement in addition to the state diploma.

The study programme in Veterinary Medicine is no exception from this general effort to internationalize: for example, the programme has forged cooperative partnerships with the Bavarian State Ministry for Nutrition, Agriculture and Forestry. Another cooperation agreement with a Czech university is currently in preparation.

"Free movers" outside the framework of partnership agreements and the Erasmus + programme seem to be an exception.

The international office of the university supports student mobility. The university provided a document that describes the official policy of RUDN as regards credit recognition. The recognition process is conducted by a certification commission and is based on the equivalence of learning outcomes.

The <u>experts</u> commend RUDN University on its extensive network of cooperating partners which includes a broad range of higher education institutions as well as other partners from inside and outside academia. The large number of double degree programmes is particularly impressive. As regards outgoing mobility, there still seems to be room for further optimization, which applies both to the university as a whole and also to the programme in Veterinary Science discussed here. Hence, the experts strongly support the university's continuing participation in the Erasmus + programme.

The experts <u>highly recommend</u> closing standardized learning agreements issued by Erasmus+

in due time to facilitate the recognition of study results for outgoing students and thus provide them with more security regarding their general course of studies.

1.4. Quality Assurance

The self-report includes an elaborate description of the university's internal quality management system. The university has implemented a central department concerned with the quality assurance of educational programmes, which deals both with internal quality management and matters of external licensing, certification and accreditation. In addition, there are units responsible for quality assurance at decentral level.

The main quality objectives (quality strategy) of the university are published on the RUDN University website. Also, a quality manual is provided which regulates the key processes of the quality assurance system.

The applied methods and tools for quality assurance include regular monitoring of performance indicators, centralized process management and continuous monitoring of student satisfaction. Written satisfaction surveys are conducted among students, staff, employers and graduates on a regular basis. The results of the surveys are published in the form of quality reports.

Apart from the measures applied at central level, faculties may conduct their own surveys to assess the quality of teaching, or particular study programmes or educational units. Based on the survey results, programmes may, for example, be updated in terms of content or teaching methods. Furthermore, each faculty and institute has its own student commission for the quality of education. At least once per semester the chairpersons of these commissions meet up with the Rector to discuss quality issues, which results in a protocol and an action plan.

In its self-report, RUDN University has presented a list of 15 quality indicators that are monitored both for each study programme and for the entire university. These indicators refer to aspects of internationality (e.g. number of joint programmes), but also to the qualifications and research output of staff, average student performance and to student satisfaction with the quality of education.

Based on the information provided in the self-report and during the online talks the <u>experts</u> conclude that RUDN University has created a complex, state-of-the-art internal quality assurance system which involves all internal and external stakeholders to a satisfactory extent. The study programmes are regularly monitored and revised with a view to the strategic and operational goals of the university and to the aim of continuous improvement. The institutional quality assurance policy and quality strategy are published on the university website, and the responsibilities for quality assurance are clearly assigned. In addition to the formal means of quality assurance, both students and staff reported that the students choose a class representative from among themselves each year. The representative is responsible for the communication between teaching staff and students regarding the organization and implementation of the curriculum. The class representative also reports students' complaints to the teaching staff. The students are represented through the students' council in the university management. (cf. Ch.1.2.)

The experts got the impression that the quality assurance system is formally established and

functional. Nonetheless, both the students and staff interviewed displayed a relatively low awareness of the quality assurance tools and procedures, as well as the outcomes of quality surveys. It was clarified, however, that the students' feedback had in the past led to changes in the curriculum. For instance, the course on practical anatomy had been shifted from the first year of study to the second.

Direct and informal feedback mechanisms exist, but there seems to be little familiarity and experience with the "official" instruments. Based on these impressions, the experts recommend promoting the implementation of quality assurance tools at programme level more intensely. This applies especially to course evaluation, which should be more frequently applied and more strongly formalized. The questionnaires should also include a free comment option, and the lecturers should reflect on the survey results and on the consequences drawn from them together with their students.

Furthermore, the experts strongly recommend introducing a close and regular monitoring of student workload at programme/and or class level as a standard quality assurance tool. In the provided documentation, the ratio between the ECTS credits awarded and the assumed student workload is not fully consistent, i.e. the same number of credits may be awarded for two educational units which differ in terms of the assumed student workload.

1.5. Transparency and Public Information

There are remarkable discrepancies between the Russian and the English website of the Veterinary Medicine programme.

The Russian website contains most key information concerning the study programme. This includes career prospects for graduates. However, intended learning outcomes are not published.

The English website contains no detailed information, but a contact person and an e-mail address are provided. The general admission rules are published in English as well.

As a general rule, the course syllabi and the exam requirements are made known to the students at the beginning of the semester. To the experts' knowledge, regulations on student assessment are not published on the website, neither in Russian nor English. However, they are made available to already enrolled students in the e-learning system TEIS in Russian.

The main website of Peoples' Friendship University is also offered in French, Spanish, Chinese and Arabic.

As far as the experts can see, the students receive most of the information they need about their study programme and its requirements in Russian. For further information, it appears that the responsible member of staff has to be contacted.

Thus, especially if internationalization is to remain a key goal of the Veterinary Medicine programme, the experts highly recommend publishing all key information, including the intended learning outcomes, regulations on student assessment and career prospects in English and, ideally, in further foreign languages. As part of an document which provides general information about the study programme, the intended learning are published in Russian on the website of RUDN. However, the intended learning outcomes should be made available at first

glance at least in Russian to visitors of the website.

2. Assessment of the Study Programme

2.1. Key Facts

The study programme in Veterinary Medicine was first introduced in the year 1993 and currently has an intake capacity of 17 students per year. The programme is identified as a 5-year full-time course and awards a total of 300 ECTS credits, out of which 212 credits are attributed to theory-based classes and 88 credits to elective classes. 30 credits are assigned to practical training and research work. Six credits are awarded for the Final State Examination which includes the defence of the final thesis (Final State Examination).

Graduates of the programme are qualified to proceed to doctoral level as stipulated in the Russian and European qualifications frameworks.

2.2. Intended Learning Outcomes

The intended learning outcomes of the programme are outlined in the self-report. In detail, graduates of the programme are amongst others to be able to:

- *use methods for assessing natural and socio-economic factors in the development of animal diseases, carry out their correction, carry out preventive measures to prevent infectious, parasitic and non-infectious pathologies, carry out general health measures to form a healthy animal population, give recommendations on keeping and feeding, evaluating the effectiveness of dispensary observation of healthy and sick animals;*

- *analyze the patterns of functioning of organs and systems of the body, use the knowledge of morpho-physiological foundations, the basic methods of clinical and immunological studies and assess the functional state of the animal's body for timely diagnosis of diseases, interpret the results of modern diagnostic technologies for age-sex groups of animals taking into account their physiological features for successful treatment and prevention activities;*

- *organize and control the transportation of animals, raw materials, animal products, beekeeping products and water crafts;*

- *organize and monitor mass diagnostic and therapeutic measures aimed at early detection, prevention and surgical treatment of dangerous diseases, including zooanthroponosis;*

- *make the right choice of narcotic drugs, drug and non-drug therapy in the treatment of diseases of various etiologies;*

- *collect scientific information, prepare reviews, annotations, prepare abstracts and reports, bibliographies, participate in scientific discussions and procedures for the defence of scientific papers of various levels, make reports and messages on the subject of research, analyze domestic and foreign experience on the research topic, develop plans, programs and methods for conducting research, conduct research and experiments;*

- *lead a team in the field of their professional activities, tolerantly perceiving social, ethnic, religious and cultural differences;*

- *fully solve professional and scientific-professional problems, realize professional-business, scientific-professional, general cultural communicative needs by means of the Russian language;*

- *ability in self-organization and self-education.*

Students of the programme are trained to become highly qualified, competitive, innovative-oriented specialists in the field of Veterinary Medicine, prepared for the Russian labour market. Students are also prepared to continue an academic career.

The content of the intended learning outcomes is in line with the expectations of graduates of the German State Examination in Veterinary Medicine. They are formally in line the with Master's level as defined in the Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area, and with Level 7 of the European Qualifications Framework. The formulation of the intended learning outcomes is state-regulated.

Another factor emphasizing that the programme is comparable to the Master's Level of the European Higher Education Area, is that the graduates gain 300 ECTS during the study course and are enabled to continue with doctoral studies upon graduation.

Nonetheless, certain formal criteria are to be adapted in order to fulfil the standards of the European Higher Education Area:

➢ The Grading Table, which is used to translate national Russian grades into ECTS grades, has to be adapted to most recent standards.

➢ The Diploma Supplement has to be adapted to most recent standards.

➢ The ECTS-Creditpoints, which are awarded throughout the curriculum, are not linked to a coherent workload. One ECTS-Creditpoint has to correspond to 27 hours/36 academic hours as prescribed in internal regulations of RUDN.

2.3.   Profile, Content and Curricular Structure

As already briefly mentioned above, the study programme encompasses both theory-based coursework and practical work in the context of internships and research projects. In terms of credits awarded, theory-classes make up roughly two thirds of the curriculum. Currently, only ten percent of the credits are awarded for practical training and research activities.

The study programme is offered in three modes of study, full time ("intra-mural"), part time ("intra-extra-mural") and distance learning ("extra-mural"). The experts were provided with further information on the practical aspects of these study programmes.

The difference between the forms of study lies in the number of classroom hours for students. The curriculum of full-time, part-time and distance learning is the same (including the allocation of credit points). Students of all forms of study receive the same study materials. The full-time programme has a regular duration of five years, the part-time and distance mode are to be finished in 5,5 years.

In the full-time form of study, the main part of the material is studied in class.

In the part-time form of study, a share of the training material is studied by students independently. Classes in the part-time programme are usually delivered during the evening.

In the distance form of study, classes are delivered at the orientation session, during which the basic concepts are explained. Students have to be present during the orientation session (two weeks) at the beginning of the semester and an examination period at the end of the semester. Extra-mural education takes place mostly outside university. The main part of the study content is studied by students independently. Most of the students of the distance branch are already working in veterinary clinics and often already hold professional training in veterinary medicine. Since 2016-2019, each year around 30 persons participate in the distance mode of the programme.

As is common practice at RUDN University and other Russian universities, the curriculum is divided into a basic part which is compulsory for all students and a variable part which includes both mandatory units and a number of elective subjects.

The majority of the "basic" classes provide comprehensive general knowledge in Veterinary Medicine as for example anatomy, physiology, virology and pharmacology. But also other subjects, such as history, philosophy, Russian or a foreign language and Latin are part of the basic classes. According to the documentation provided, the "basic part" of the curriculum makes up for 212 credit points. The "basic" courses are delivered throughout all five years of the study programme. The variable part, which consists of a wide range of elective classes, begins in the first semester and covers a total of 58 credit points. In the variable part students can choose classes such as "medicinal and poisonous plants", "foreign language for professional communication", "zoopsychology" or "livestock processing technology".

In the fourth and fifth year, two focus areas ("specializations") are offered. Students may focus either on clinical veterinary medicine or on veterinary sanitary inspection. Both specializations comprise 25 credit points.

As mentioned above, only 10% of the curriculum are dedicated to practical training. Of these 30 ECTS credits, 6 credits are awarded for "training practice". The "training practice" comprises two small practical study units, in which primary professional and research skills are to be gained. Another 18 credits are awarded for a work placement (also referred to as pre-diploma internship). The students reported that they received advice and guidance from teaching staff throughout this part of their studies. Thanks to the wide network of the university, students seem to be able to absolve their internships and smaller practices in the institutions of their choice.

Internships may be absolved with one of the numerous partners of the Department of Veterinary Medicine. They are located in the city of Moscow and the surrounding region and comprise institutions as diverse as veterinary clinics, laboratories, research institutes, animal disease stations, agricultural enterprises, livestock production and processing enterprises or other specialized veterinary organizations. According to the self-report, students with good grades have the possibility to absolve an international internship with partners in Italy, Austria or Germany. Ideally, the internships also serve as preparation for the final thesis.

It was reported that the internships are assessed in several ways. The students receive tasks

before leaving for their internships. The responsible supervisors visit the students during their practical phase and check on their experiences. In addition to that, the students have to deliver a diary (including photographs) in which they reflect upon their gained competencies.

During their internship students are expected to further deepen their research skills and to apply the acquired theoretical knowledge in practical contexts. It also serves as a preparation for the final thesis. The final state attestation, including both the state exam and the defense, is credited with another 6 ECTS credits.

The expert panel would like to <u>commend</u> the Department of Veterinary Medicine for designing a comprehensive and encompassing curriculum in veterinary medicine. The graduates of the programme are highly qualified and thus in demand on the Russian labor market, but are also well-qualified to continue their studies at doctoral level.

As was reported during the virtual talks, further internationalization is a strategic goal of the study programme. In order to align the programme content more closely with international standards, the expert panel <u>recommends</u> including a course on animal welfare into the curriculum.

Moreover, the graduates mentioned during the interviews that clinical pharmacology would be a further useful course to include in the curriculum. Both students and graduates stressed that more practical training in the form of laboratory work, field trips and excursions and internships would enhance their ability to work on the job. With a view to the relatively low share of credit points allocated to practical training, the experts <u>recommend</u> expanding the time foreseen for gathering hands-on experiences. The practical training should ideally comprise agriculture and husbandry, clinical treatment, veterinary public health, food hygiene and abattoirs. Moreover, individual clinical training on all relevant small and large animals under supervision of academic staff should be conducted. The experts <u>recommend</u> to dedicate 40 to 50 ECTS for practical training in the curriculum.

With regard to the self-report of the university and the students' feedback, the expert panel <u>finds</u> that the class schedule could benefit from a reorganization. Classes could be taught in more comprehensive timeslots. Apart from the organizational aspect, the experts are uncertain about the accuracy of the calculated student workload as reflected in the awarded ECTS credit points. The students interviewed rather reported that their weekly workload was relatively low. Moreover, as displayed in the provided students' survey, two thirds of all students are already working in the field of Veterinary Medicine. The number of weekly working hours is not given in the survey results. The student workload should therefore be monitored more closely. In case the results reveal a strong mismatch between the credit points and the actual average workload, adequate measures should be taken in response, as e.g. an enhancement of the programme's content as suggested above.

2.4. Methods of Teaching and Student Assessment

Most educational components of the programme combine lectures or seminars with laboratory work. As a general rule, the students also regularly present the results of their group or individual projects in class.

The restrictions due to the Corona crisis were met appropriately. Online courses and online assessment are in place and appear to be working well.

Various types and methods of student assessment are applied in the programme, including oral and written tests, presentations, lab work or written homework assignments. The in-class performance of students also has an impact on the overall grade. According to the RUDN regulations, failed exams may be repeated twice within the first two months of the following semester. The students reported that if a written test was s failed, a second oral examination usually took place. The date for the second exam is communicated along with the results of the first test. If the second exam is also failed, a third oral exam in front of a commission takes place. In case the third exam is also failed, students are expelled.

According to the provided documentation, the students studying in the distance mode of study have to undergo the same amount of assessments as foreseen in the full-time mode of study. Oral tests are conducted during the orientation session and exam period. All other tests are taken remotely and send to the teachers via post or email. In case of questions, personal consultations are arranged between the teacher and student via phone or email.

The drop-out rate in the programme lies at around ten percent. Students decide to leave the programme for personal reasons, such as health issues, or because they come to the conclusion that veterinary medicine is not their preferred profession. Poor examination results are usually not the reason for dropping out of the programme. The relatively high attrition rate is also partly explained by the low overall number of students per year.

Based on all information provided, the underline experts conclude that the applied methods of teaching and assessment are adequate for a Master's programme of this discipline and are well aligned with the intended learning outcomes. Students reported that the assessment was generally fair and that the exam questions were in line with the content of the classes.

The outcomes of the interviews with students and teachers give reason for the conclusion that sufficient "hands-on"-experience is provided through training in laboratories. Nonetheless, a further enhancement of practical training might contribute to the overall learning experience of the students and is thus recommended. The above mentioned diary, which has to be delivered by the students after their internships (see Chapter 2.3.), could be enhanced. All practical experiences could be documented in a continuous diary.

2.5.   Teaching Faculty

In total, ten professors and 24 associate professors are involved in the programme in Veterinary Medicine, supported by seven senior lecturers and three assistants. CVs of all academic staff have been submitted as part of the self-report, and the experts had the opportunity to conduct digital talks with a large part of the teaching faculty. The teacher-student-ratio allows for individual student support.

The majority of the teaching faculty hold academic qualifications in the field of Veterinary Medicine. During the digital talks, it became clear that many lecturers are also practicing as veterinary doctors. It is thus ensured that recent developments in practical veterinary medicine are integrated into the teaching. Moreover, students benefit from the lecturers' professional contacts and networks in their search for employment positions.

A professional development programme and a continuous learning programme for lecturers are in place at the university. According to the teaching staff, the human resources department monitors the skills of the lecturers on an annual basis or even more frequently. A working plan for each member of the teaching body is designed, corresponding to the requirements of the academic position. Performance indicators are amongst others the publishing activity, participation in professional development programmes, external fund raising for RUDN or the quality of teaching materials. Twice a year, at the end of May and December, the results are reported and discussed between the teacher and the "Basic Training Unit" of the university.

In accordance with the findings, lecturers attend professional development programmes, either in their speciality or in other fields, as for example, foreign languages. Participation in professional development programmes has to be proved in order to receive contract prolongations at the university. If the performance is in line with the individual working plan, the teacher receives an extra salary. If the performance requirements are continuously not met, the teaching contract will eventually be terminated by RUDN.

Participation in conferences is also encouraged and financially supported by RUDN.

Based on the written and oral information provided, the experts conclude that the programme has a sufficient number of highly qualified teaching staff at its disposal. Professional development is ensured based on the university's general policies. Staff mobility is encouraged by special funds allocated for this purpose. Staff recruitment procedures are convincing with regards to the provided documentation and the general impressions from the digital talks.

2.6.   Infrastructure, Resources and Learning Environment

The experts received information about the equipment provided by selected internship partners before the online interviews took place. During the talks, the panel was also given a virtual tour of the veterinary clinic at RUDN. The clinic is run by RUDN in cooperation with private investors. It is an external clinic which has been based at the Department of Veterinary Medicine for ten years. It is open 24/7.

The clinic hosts around 600 students per year. About 100 veterinarians practice there, performing operations, x-rays, ultrasound and MRTs, brain surgeries or blood analyses. It was reported that six to eight MRTs and 40 ultrasound examinations were conducted every day.

According to the interviewed members of faculty, students are encouraged to gather practical experience at the clinic on top of the compulsory practical training in their free time. Part-time students usually spend time at the clinic on Saturdays.

The clinic based at RUDN is equipped for the treatment of small animals. In order to train students for the treatment of bigger animals, the university has closed cooperative relationships with other clinics in Moscow and the surrounding area. In order to qualify as suitable for an "external" internship placement, the respective clinics and institutes have to meet certain criteria, which are regularly checked. For instance, they must dispose of state-of-the-art equipment and qualified staff. Laboratories must also meet general safety requirements. Currently, the department of veterinary medicine has more than 60 cooperation partners.

According to the students, the library holds sufficient resources in Russian and English. A lot of material is also accessible online. Moreover, equipment such as microscopes or specimen to train e.g. dissections were described as sufficient.

During the talks the members of faculty mentioned that there were three to four tutors for all Veterinarian students. Moreover, teachers offer additional office hours for extra support twice a week. Students also expressed satisfaction with the general learning environment, which they described as open and dynamic. Various clubs and societies also add to the international and lively atmosphere on campus.

The experts <u>commend</u> RUDN on the creation of a truly international campus in the heart of Moscow. They have gained the overall impression that the students of the programme in Veterinary Medicine benefit from a modern learning environment and have all means at their disposal to reach their intended learning outcomes.

Especially the clinic based at RUDN, with its state-of-the-art equipment, appears to lay ground for an excellent learning experience of the students. Students are able to train various Veterinarian operations and treatments here. This learning experience is enriched by the wide network of external partners, to which thorough quality standards are applied.

The infrastructure is completed by the library, which was described as fully and sufficiently equipped.