

#### 4.1.3 Appendix C – COE Code of Conduct

##### ***Council on Education Code of Conduct***

The code of conduct for Council on Education members is described herein. Council members and others participating in accreditation activities, including site visitors as well as AVMA and AAVMC staff, are expected to adhere to the COE code of conduct at all times. Failure to do so may result in measures including, but not limited to, a written reprimand or dismissal from the Council.

##### ***Integrity***

To encourage ongoing confidence in the specialized accreditation process, both the college and the COE must be assured that functions assigned to each entity are clearly understood. The following are some of the areas where special efforts must be made to ensure integrity of the process:

The Council must conform to the AVMA Conflict of Interest Policy at all times, not just during site visits. Site visitors and COE members must not advise (paid or unpaid consultation) institutions on matters pertaining to accreditation, except in the course of their duties for an institution by which they currently are employed, or as a Liaison Committee member advising a developing school.

During the evaluation process, the Council must evaluate the college only on the Standard Requirements for Accreditation. Application of the standard requirements to all college programs must be unbiased, and free from opinion regarding issues not relevant to whether the Standards are met.

The site visit and deliberation toward the assignment of accreditation status must be conducted with the highest ethical standards and confidentiality.

All materials, discussions, and decisions of the Council regarding accreditation must be confidential. In addition to the conflicts of interest listed in the AVMA Conflict of Interest Policy, no Council member will participate in site visits, discussions of interim reports, or discussions of reports of evaluation of any institution about which the member has made comments publicly, verbal or written, for or against the accreditation of that institution.

The Council must recognize college and program diversity when making accreditation decisions.

The Council must inform all appropriate federal, state, university, and college officials of matters related to accreditation in a timely manner. These communications should be made by the COE Chair, or staff if delegated to do so by the chair.

##### ***Confidentiality***

So that all matters dealing with accreditation of colleges of veterinary medicine are conducted with integrity and objectivity, the COE has adopted a confidentiality policy. Those who participate in COE activities, including but not limited to elected COE members, non-COE site team members, and appropriate AVMA staff, must maintain the confidentiality of all non-public information relating to accreditation and veterinary education.

In order to provide colleges, accrediting and state agencies, and the public with the most accurate information possible, the COE has adopted specific policies and procedures governing all COE

communications. Communications that are not consistent with the COE's policies and procedures and that have not been approved and issued by the COE are strictly prohibited. All discussions, observations, and documents associated with site visits and accreditation decisions are confidential to the COE and should not be discussed with anyone other than COE members, COE-associated AVMA and AAVMC staff, and site team members when necessary. Information regarding accreditation decisions cannot be shared with any individual or group other than: 1) the university and college through the official report of evaluation, 2) reports to accrediting and state agencies, and 3) the public through official announcements and communications made by the COE chair. Any inquiries made to COE members regarding the accreditation process or about specific programs should be referred to the COE Chair and appropriate AVMA staff.

It is the policy of the COE that its accreditation decisions are independent and are not subject to interference from any organization or individual. COE-associated AVMA and AAVMC staff may attend COE meetings and provide assistance to the COE as necessary, and shall maintain the confidentiality of all non-public information regarding accreditation decisions. The COE Chair and appropriate AVMA staff may share non-public information regarding accreditation decisions with appropriate AVMA officials relating to potential claimed liability of the AVMA as a parent organization of the AVMA COE. Should the need arise to consult with other AVMA-affiliated individuals, outside experts, or other consultants, the COE Chair and appropriate AVMA staff shall be consulted beforehand.

In accordance with AVMA policy, all information related to the Council on Education (COE) accreditation of a veterinary medical college is strictly confidential. This includes, but is not limited to, reports of evaluation, letters, self-evaluation and accreditation materials, interim/annual reports, correspondence, and the content of any discussion related to the veterinary medical college or its accreditation. All requests for information related to a specific institution and/or veterinary medical college must be referred to AVMA staff or the respective institution.

Freedom of Information Acts, which may be applicable in a given state, province, or country do not apply to AVMA confidential information related to the accreditation of veterinary medical colleges. Information requested through such acts may be obtained through due process from the respective institution or state/province/country office.

### ***Conduct during COE Meetings***

No member of the COE who has an identified conflict of interest shall participate in any way in accrediting decisions. The individual shall leave the room when the report in question is being discussed. In cases where the existence of a conflict of interest is less obvious, it is the responsibility of any Council member who feels a potential conflict of interest exists to consult the COE chair prior to the discussion. The COE chair shall discuss the matter with the Executive Committee, and advise the COE member whether the conflict is of a nature to warrant that the member recuse himself/herself from the discussion. In addition, any COE member may bring forth concerns to the COE Chair that another member may have a conflict of interest. The Chair and the Executive Committee will discuss the matter with the member for whom there is a perceived conflict, and the Chair will advise the member if it is warranted that the member recuse himself/herself from the discussion. The conflict of interest policy shall be limited to decisions regarding accreditation and shall not infer conflict with other decision-making responsibilities.

Meetings will be conducted according to Roberts Rules of Order as practiced by the AVMA and outlined in the COE Policies and Procedures manual. Council members should feel free to discuss matters

openly, but only after being recognized by the Chair. Discussions should be conducted in a collegial fashion, allowing all members to voice their opinions on the matters being discussed.

### ***Conduct during COE Site Visits***

COE members will be cognizant of any possible conflict of interest, either real or perceived, when being considered as a possible member of a site visit team. Members of the Council, public members, or AVMA staff are not eligible to participate in the site visit if a conflict of interest is identified.

The chair of the site visit team appoints a vice-chair, and has the authority to dismiss any member of the team who has a conflict of interest or who becomes disruptive or unmanageable during any phase of the evaluation. Should a conflict of interest or disruption occur with the chair, the vice-chair can assume leadership of the site team with unanimous consent of the remaining members of the team. If the conflict is identified during the site visit and is not covered by the Policies and Procedures manual, neutral members of the team, plus an equal number of members from the college appointed by the dean, will resolve the issue. If the issue is not resolved by the team, the person is dismissed by the chair.

Following a site visit, the dean is asked to inform each faculty member, student, and administrator information how to access an on-line evaluation form. The SRG conducts an analysis of the survey according to frequency and distribution of response, and prepares a report to the COE. The COE Committee on Evaluation studies the report and makes recommendations to the Council regarding changes to be made in the site visit process. During its fall meeting, the COE reviews the recommendation and initiates necessary changes to improve the site visit to ensure that the standards are applied in a consistent and reliable manner.

Site team members are required to conduct themselves professionally, courteously, and with the utmost respect for faculty, students, and other representatives of the college educational program visited as well as fellow site visit team members.

Site team members must:

- Remember that the objectives of accreditation include verifying that an institution or program meets established standards, assisting prospective students in identifying acceptable institutions, creating goals for self-improvement of weaker programs and stimulating a general raising of standards among educational institutions, and involving the faculty and appropriate staff comprehensively in institutional evaluation and planning;
- Keep a positive attitude and not offer negative feedback or other criticism during the site visit;
- Remember that all materials, discussions, deliberations, and reports of the site visit are confidential;
- Refrain from discussing the “state of a college” with anyone other than site team members and appropriate AVMA staff;
- Remain open-minded throughout the evaluation process;
- Carefully study the materials contained in the college self-study to acquire a basic understanding of the college and its operation;
- Be prepared for four and a half days of intense work with long evenings;
- Participate in the discussions, both with college administration and personnel, and in the team deliberations;
- Focus on and uphold the Standards of Accreditation;
- Evaluate the institution regarding its compliance with the Standards of Accreditation, not as compared to other institutions;

- Be alert at all times using all senses;
- Be on time for all functions;
- Be involved in all functions of the site visit;
- Refer all requests for information to the site team chair;
- Enter into discussions by asking good questions, but do not enter involved discussions except for clarification of unclear points;
- Be a good listener, and record observations, and plan on being present during all discussions as appropriate to the schedule;
- Dress in corporate/professional attire for all site visit activities (men are asked to wear suits or coats and ties, and women are asked to wear suits or dresses); and
- Wear AVMA-COE identification badges at all times.

Site team members must not:

- Bring any preconceived ideas about the college to the site visit;
- Have a personal agenda regarding the college, its programs, or people;
- Become separated from the team for any reason unless so assigned by the site team chair;
- Become involved in a confrontation involving any issue of the visit;
- Compare colleges or programs, since each college and its program will be unique and the Council is not attempting to diminish diversity among programs or to hinder or impede innovation;
- Offer judgments on solutions to problems during the course of the visit; these activities are to be reserved for the exit interviews with the college dean and university president;
- Ask questions during about issues not related to the standards.
- Tell “war stories”.

Remember at all times, the site team is a guest of the college and is there to assist the college in meeting its mission and goals.

There is no place in accreditation for adversarial relationships. The college and the Council should proceed with the premise that both parties are dedicated to the common goal of quality in veterinary education. Only through full and open communication and cooperative efforts to correct deficiencies can educational excellence be attained.

Interactions between the Council and the colleges should have a collegial tone, and be based on mutual trust and a desire to arrive at a full understanding of the current status of the educational program of the college. The dean and other administrative officers should be knowledgeable in the definitions of the various levels of accreditation status and the impact of the failure to meet one or more of the standards.

Accreditation decisions made by the COE can have far-reaching consequences for the College. Careful and thoughtful site visit activities and accreditation decision activities must reflect the integrity of the process.

As the days pass, site team members will develop a clear sense of the college’s ability to comply with the standards and its ability to sustain the program within the resources identified. Many of your thoughts will be condensed and entered into the draft of the evaluation report executive sessions of the site team. During the last team executive sessions, the chair will begin to formulate recommendations to be verbally presented to the dean of the college (and his/her designated group) and the president of the university (and his/her designated group). It is important that there is site team consensus with these

recommendations. At these two final meetings the site team chair will verbally present the finding of the team. Other team members should not speak until the report is complete, or unless the chair, dean, or president asks for additional information wherein a team member might make a substantial contribution.



### **Council on Education Code of Conduct**

I agree that I have read and understand the above Council on Education Code of Conduct and I agree to comply with all policies and rules contained therein.

Name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_