Terms of reference for the review of the Institute of Veterinary Research

Introduction

The research assessment will cover the research programs of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine of Utrecht University (FVM-UU). The Institute of Veterinary Research (IVR) is responsible for research management within the FVM-UU and, therefore, Utrecht University will participate in this research assessment through this research institute.

During 2005, IVR’s research program has been restructured in order to obtain more focus and critical mass. As of January 2006, the new research organization has been put into effect and from that date IVR research encompasses the following interdisciplinary, cross-departmental research programs:

- Biology of Reproductive Cells;
- Tissue Repair;
- Emotion and Cognition;
- Risk assessment of Toxic and Immunomodulatory Agents;
- Strategic Infection Biology;
- Advances in Veterinary Medicine.

The assessment will be confined to the research performance of each of the above mentioned programs as a whole, thus without evaluating the contribution of the research groups from the participating departments apart. The objectives of this assessment are to enhance the quality of the research programs and to contribute to the accountability of the research carried out at the FVM-UU during the period under review. In addition to an evaluation and assessment of past performance, also future research plans with anticipated results are to be considered. So, the evaluation is a combination of retrospective and prospective analysis. The emphasis will be on the prospective analysis.

The research management at the institutional level will also be evaluated. This will include leadership and management of processes, research policy and strategies, management of people, human resources policy, available means and appreciation by peers. Proper attention will be given to postgraduate education and training programs. The evaluation should be carried out in view of the multidisciplinary context of veterinary research.

For the assessment the ‘Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP) 2009-2015 for research assessment in The Netherlands’ will be used. The three main Dutch organizations responsible for publicly funded research in The Netherlands – the universities, the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) and the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) – defined this protocol for practical use in all research evaluations conducted under their auspices. The SEP stipulates the general requirements for the research assessments. Specific information for the assessment of the IVR research program will be described below.
Delineation and required expertise of committee members

The members of the review committee should have a positive attitude towards fundamental and applied aspects of veterinary research, and the multidisciplinary character of the discipline of Veterinary Sciences.

The following expertise is required of the members of the review committee:

- excellent expertise in at least one of the following fields of Veterinary Sciences: Reproductive Biology, Regenerative Medicine, Behavioral Sciences, Risk Assessment Sciences, Infection Biology and Veterinary Science.
- reasonable expertise in and overview of fields other than his/her own specialization.

The international review committee will consist of seven members, including the chair, in order to cover all fields mentioned above. The chairman should have a bird's eye view of the entire research area.

Assessment process

The research assessment of the IVR will cover the research published in the period 2006 up to and including 2011. The review committee is independent and will determine its own method of working within the framework of the SEP. The assessment will be based on a self-evaluation report provided by the research program coordinators and the management of the IVR. The self-evaluation report will include information about the scientific achievements (including their valorization) and the graduate training. In addition, the committee - or individual committee members - will have meetings with the program coordinators and the coordinators of the participating research groups and - if desired by the committee - other participants in the research programs (e.g. PhD students or post-docs) and will visit research facilities.

In order to provide supportive information on the research quality and relevance, citation analysis will be part of the procedure. The Centre for Science and Technology Studies of Leiden University will be asked to perform such an analysis. In addition, the results of internal audits of past performance performed by the IVR will be included in the self-evaluation report. The committee is kindly asked, however, to put emphasis on the perspectives of the different IVR research programs and the individual research groups, their interdisciplinary mission and their embedding in the Utrecht University focus areas of research.

Level of aggregation

In the SEP, a research program is defined as ‘a coherent set of research activities having a common mission and being the work of a group of people who more or less work together’. In the current assessment, cross-departmental research programs and departmental research groups will be reviewed. Each research group encompasses one or more full-time professors and their staff.
List of program members

In the self-evaluation report, the list of program members of each program will include the following ranks: full professors, associate professors, assistant professors and others with a PhD degree involved in research such as post-docs and all staff members at the postgraduate level who have not (yet) obtained a PhD-degree. The list will include all members involved in the program during the assessment period, and will state during which period of time the members were involved. Only the period during which the program members were appointed by or paid for research at FVM-UU - either through direct or indirect governmental funding or through industrial, European Union or other funding - will be taken into account.

Contents of the documentation

To prepare for the external evaluation, the IVR has been asked to provide a set of documents containing all the relevant information such as the self-evaluation report. The SEP describes the required data and formats. This documentation will reflect both the level of the IVR as a whole and the research programs and research groups that work within the jurisdiction of the institute. Both the level of the institute and the level of the programs and groups will be specified comprehensively in annual units meaning that the factual data of the research programs and other research add up to the institute’s data.

Terms of reference

The review committee is kindly asked to assess against international standards the quality, productivity, relevance and viability of the Institute of Veterinary Research, its research and graduate program, in the period 2006 up to and including 2011, on the basis of the Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP) and taking into account the additional information provided in this document. At the program level, the judgment should be cast in both qualitative and quantitative terms. For the quantitative assessment the five point scale as specified in the SEP should be used. At the institute level a judgment in qualitative terms will do.