

RESEARCH REVIEW

Faculty of Veterinary Medicine

Utrecht University

2018-2024

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Preface

It is with great pleasure that I present this preface to the evaluation report of the research review of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. In preparation for the evaluation, the committee was provided with extensive documentation, including a detailed self-assessment prepared by the Faculty Board. Prior to the site visit to the Faculty in Utrecht, the committee members met online to discuss the evaluation process and to allocate specific tasks.

The site visit took place from November 2 to 4, 2025. During this period, the committee conducted interviews with the Dean and Vice-Dean, as well as with faculty staff, PhD candidates, and external stakeholders. In addition, the committee members toured several of the Faculty's facilities. Throughout the process, the committee was supported by Esther Poort, who served as external secretary. She assisted in the preparation of the research review and coordinated the completion of the written report.

In this report, the committee presents its assessment, outlining its impressions, findings, and recommendations concerning the Faculty's current and future research activities. The evaluation committee greatly appreciated the frank and open atmosphere that prevailed throughout the site visit and would like to express its sincere thanks to all those involved in the research review. On behalf of the Committee,

Professor Gerald de Haan

(Chair of the Committee)



Executive summary

This report presents the assessment of the research conducted at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine (FVM) of Utrecht University over the period 2018–2024. FVM has organised its research activities within three departments and across the faculty-wide, cross-cutting themes One Health, One Medicine and Veterinary Biomedicine. This organisational model supports interdisciplinary collaboration while maintaining clear lines of responsibility at department level.

The committee concludes that FVM has a clear mission and well-defined strategic ambitions that align with major societal challenges at the interface of animal, human, and environmental health. These ambitions are translated into a coherent strategy, with a clear thematic focus and a strong emphasis on collaboration across disciplines. As the only Faculty of Veterinary Medicine in the Netherlands, FVM holds a nationally unique position by combining veterinary science with biomedical and translational research and by linking animal health to broader public health and sustainability agendas. Within the One Health framework, the committee recognises FVM's strength in its distinctly veterinary and comparative perspective, with animal health as a central starting point. At the same time, maintaining a clear and distinctive veterinary identity within the One Health framework, situated in a funding landscape that draws towards human medicine and public health, will require continued attention and deliberate choices.

The committee assesses the overall quality of the research as high. FVM delivers a strong and consistent body of research that is highly visible and well cited internationally. The research portfolio is broad and coherent, covering fundamental and molecular work, as well as applied and clinical studies. Clear strengths are visible across all three departments, including infectious diseases, oncology, regenerative medicine, companion animal health, population health and toxicology. This combination of expertise, together with strong interdisciplinary collaboration and active participation in international research projects and networks, supports the Faculty's scientific standing and international profile. However, within this portfolio, research on porcine health and pork production systems at FVM is limited. Given the importance of pigs in Dutch livestock production and in One Health challenges, this highlights the need for a clearer strategic choice about FVM's role in this area, taking into account the wider national and international research and stakeholder landscape.

The societal relevance of the research is clearly reflected in the Faculty's research portfolio and external engagement. FVM addresses major societal challenges, including zoonotic diseases, antimicrobial resistance, food safety, animal welfare, and sustainable livestock systems. Societal impact is achieved mainly through scientific contributions to policy, guidelines, and public debate, with researchers playing active advisory roles at national and international levels. While the Faculty has taken steps to support and recognise this engagement, the committee considers that societal impact could be strengthened. In line with the Faculty's own reflection, this would require a more focused and systematic approach to translating research to the Dutch veterinary field, particularly first-line veterinary practice. Given the environmental impacts and ethical issues of livestock farming today, the committee finds that it could be clearer what the term 'sustainable' entails in FVM's interdisciplinary research and outreach to support sustainable livestock systems. Furthermore, greater clarity on key stakeholder groups, and on how research findings reach policy, professional standards, and everyday veterinary decision-making, would help make these efforts more targeted and effective.

With regard to viability, the committee values the Faculty's capacity to sustain its research ambitions. The professionalisation of research support, including grant development and project management, is a clear strength and has contributed to increased success in competitive funding and large collaborative projects. At the same time, the committee notes that FVM operates in an increasingly competitive



funding landscape. Continued sharpening of strategic choices in partnerships and research focus will be important to maintain long-term resilience.

Open Science is very strongly embedded within the Faculty's research culture. The committee commends FVM for its commitment to open access publishing and the systematic development of FAIR data practices, supported by data stewards, training programmes and harmonisation efforts across departments. These practices enhance transparency, reproducibility and broader societal trust in and use of research outcomes.

The academic culture at FVM is characterised by openness, collegiality and a self-aware and learning academic environment. Initiatives aimed at recognising diverse academic contributions and supporting differentiated career paths are positively received, although their implementation varies across departments. Social safety is taken seriously, with clear structures in place. The committee encourages continued investment in leadership development, particularly in relation to team management, supervision and inclusive working environments.

In the area of human resources and talent development, the committee recognises the Faculty's strong support structures and commitment to career development. Challenges remain for specific groups. Researchers with clinical responsibilities experience difficulties in securing sufficient protected time for research. While promising pilot initiatives exist, their evaluation and broader implementation warrant continued attention. Postdoctoral researchers would benefit from more visible and structured support.

The committee recognises PhD candidates as a core component of the research environment. Structures for supervision, training and support are in place and reflect increasing attention to quality, wellbeing and professional development. At the same time, experiences of supervision vary across groups. Continued attention to consistency, clear expectations and monitoring of progress is therefore important. The committee also encourages the Faculty to strengthen insight into the career trajectories of PhD graduates, further develop alumni networks, and invest in initiatives that enhance PhD candidates' sense of belonging to the Faculty.

Overall, the committee concludes that FVM is a vibrant and well-functioning research environment with strong scientific quality, clear societal relevance and a solid organisational foundation. The Faculty is well positioned for the future. Continued consolidation of recent strategic developments, combined with selective sharpening of priorities and consistent implementation of policies, will further strengthen long-term societal impact, resilience and international standing.



1. Introduction

1.1 Aim of the assessment

All publicly funded university research in the Netherlands is evaluated at regular intervals in compliance with a national strategy evaluation protocol (SEP 2021-2027), as agreed by the Universities of the Netherlands (UNL), the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) and the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW). The evaluation process, which is applied at the research unit level, consists of an external peer review conducted every six years.

The Committee is requested to assess the quality of research conducted by the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine (FVM) of Utrecht University (UU) as well as to offer recommendations to improve the quality of research and the strategy of the Faculty. This report describes the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of this external assessment of the Faculty's research.

1.2 The Committee

The Board of Utrecht University appointed the following members of the committee:

- Professor dr. Gerald de Haan, Director Sanquin Research, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands (committee chair);
- Professor dr. Liza Rosenbaum Nielsen, University of Copenhagen, Denmark;
- Professor dr. Dirk Werling, University of London, United Kingdom;
- Professor dr. Martien Groenen, Wageningen University, the Netherlands;
- Professor dr. Debbie Archer, University of Liverpool, United Kingdom;
- Dr. Victoria de Leeuw, National Institute for Public Health and the Environment, the Netherlands;
- Denise Froon Torenstra (MD), Prinses Máxima Center, the Netherlands (PhD candidate).

The Board appointed Drs. Esther Poort of De Onderzoekerij as the Committee secretary. All Committee members signed a declaration form stating no conflict of interest and ensuring impartiality and confidentiality.

1.3 Procedures followed by the Committee

Before the site visit, the Committee reviewed detailed documentation comprising the self-assessment report of the Faculty including appendices.

The committee proceeded according to the Strategy Evaluation Protocol (SEP) 2021-2027. The assessment was based on the documentation provided by the faculty and the interviews with the Faculty Board, department boards, senior, mid-career and junior researchers, PhD candidate representatives, representatives of the Graduate school of Life sciences (GSLs), the PhD confidential advisor, the interpersonal integrity advisor, and societal stakeholders. The site visit and interviews took place on November 3 and November 4, 2025 (see Appendix A).

The committee discussed its assessment at its final session during the site visit. Following the site visit, committee members provided written input for the report. In close collaboration with the chair, the secretary then compiled the initial version of the committee report. The committee members commented by email on the draft report. The draft version was then presented to the institute for



factual corrections and comments. Subsequently, the text was finalised and presented to the Board of the University.



2. Management and organisation

Utrecht University's Faculty of Veterinary Medicine (FVM) is the only institution in the Netherlands offering an academic degree in veterinary medicine. Research and education are organised within three departments: Biomolecular Health Sciences (BHS), Clinical Sciences (CS), and Population Health Sciences (PHS). This structure, introduced through a reorganisation in 2020, aimed to strengthen the faculty's research profile and enhance coherence and visibility across its activities. Each department is responsible for the faculty's three core tasks: (1) academic research, (2) veterinary education, and (3) veterinary patient care. The departments operate with a broad mandate, granting them autonomy in decisions on personnel, facilities, and strategic investments.

Within the departments, research is carried out by 26 research groups led by senior academics and supported by associate and assistant professors, PhD candidates, postdoctoral researchers, clinicians, and technical and administrative staff. By the end of the assessment period, FVM employed 473 research staff, representing approximately 300 full-time equivalents (FTE) dedicated to research. This number had risen from around 360 individuals in 2018, reflecting substantial growth in postdoctoral and PhD positions (more information is provided in Appendix B).

In BHS and PHS, research groups are clustered into thematic divisions, while in CS, research is organised into interdisciplinary focus areas that bridge clinical disciplines. Research capacity is thus distributed across the departments, each with their own and main scientific foci: fundamental biomedical and molecular research in BHS, clinical and translational research in CS, and population-level and environmental health studies in PHS.

In addition to the departmental structure, three cross-cutting research themes aim to promote collaboration across disciplines: One Health, One Medicine, and Veterinary Biomedicine. These themes address, respectively, the interconnections between animals, humans, and the environment; the parallels between human and veterinary medicine; and the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of animal diseases. Theme leaders facilitate interdepartmental and external collaboration but do not manage dedicated budgets.

Decision-making in research policy involves several governance bodies. The Faculty Board, composed of the dean, faculty director, vice-deans for education and research, and a student assessor, oversees the overall management of research, education, and patient care. The Department Boards manage day-to-day operations within the departments and ensure alignment between teaching, clinical activities, and research. The Research Council, chaired by the vice-dean for research, brings together research theme leaders, departmental research managers, and the head of the Research Support Office (RSO). Representatives of the Vet PhD Council and junior principal investigators also participate, ensuring input from early-career researchers. The Research Council advises the Faculty Board on research policy and quality assurance.

FVM's research is firmly embedded within the Utrecht Science Park and the University's Strategic Theme Life Sciences (STLS). Through this embedding, FVM collaborates closely with the Faculty of Science, the University Medical Centre Utrecht (UMCU), the Princess Máxima Center, and other academic and applied science partners. Major interfaculty initiatives include the Regenerative Medicine Centre Utrecht (RMCU) and the Institute for Risk Assessment Sciences (IRAS), which bring together expertise in regenerative medicine and toxicology and environmental health, respectively. This integrated environment provides FVM researchers with access to state-of-the-art facilities and an extensive network of scientific and societal partners.



3. Assessment of the research

3.1 Mission, aims, and strategy

The overall mission and aims of the FVM have been clearly articulated. The research at the FVM aims to address major challenges in animal health, as well as how human health may be impacted by animals in their shared environment. This holistic approach, in which ecosystem, animal and human health depend on each other (referred to as One Health) and which capitalises on parallels that can be drawn between veterinary and human medicine (referred to as One Medicine), is laudable and indeed places the FVM in a nationally unique position, given that it is the only Faculty of Veterinary Science in the Netherlands. Internationally, the FVM is regarded as a prominent institute in the field of veterinary science.

The committee noted that, while the FVM's commitment to One Health is clear, the ecological and environmental dimensions of One Health, as emphasised in the recent One Health High-Level Expert Panel (OHHLEP) definition, which explicitly links One Health to planetary health, receive relatively little attention in the current strategy. Strengthening this element would further enhance the Faculty's strategic positioning within national and international One Health initiatives, and the Faculty's contribution to sustainability.

The committee observed that newly introduced research clusters such as 'Sustainable Poultry Health' and 'Sustainable Ruminant Health' represent promising developments. However, greater clarity is needed regarding what the term 'sustainable' encompasses, whether it refers primarily to economic or environmental considerations, animal health and welfare, or to a broader socio-economic and systems perspective. Clearer articulation of this focus would sharpen the Faculty's strategic profile and open new collaboration opportunities in the field of sustainable livestock and food production systems.

The FVM has undergone significant changes during the reporting period. Coinciding with the arrival of new leadership, the previous eight departments have now been reorganised into three departments. Although these organisational changes are still relatively recent, the committee was under the impression that focussing the research activities within three departments has been, and will continue to be, helpful in capitalising on research strengths and facilitating future investments. The somewhat scattered activities that the previous SEP evaluation committee commented upon have clearly been addressed by the Faculty leadership.

The committee discussed the perceived lack of visibility and veterinary identity of the FVM in the local and national research environment. This lack of identity is partly the result of limited funding opportunities for veterinary medicine and animal health research, which sometimes results in scientists from the FVM focusing more on human health. This situation was not uniformly regarded as problematic by all departments. If increased visibility and identity are important topics for the FVM to address, it is essential that this issue is indeed recognised as a joint problem by the leadership of the three departments.

In addition, several professors with partial affiliations to the FVM are physically located in other research buildings and institutes, such as the UMCU, the Hubrecht Institute, the Regenerative Medicine Centre Utrecht (RMCU) and the Princess Máxima Center. The committee is aware that these groups fall outside the formal scope of the FVM research evaluation. Nevertheless, while such federated arrangements facilitate cross-fertilisation with other institutes on the campus, it is not always clear to what extent this translates into increased local and (inter)national visibility for the FVM. It would be important to initiate a process in which the research achievements of staff with FVM affiliations are increasingly and consistently attributed to the FVM. An important future contributor to increased visibility and identity is the scheduled new FVM building. If properly executed, this new building may well serve as a magnet for veterinary medicine and animal-health-oriented research.



The committee noticed that research activities on porcine health were limited. With respect to pig health, the Faculty Board indicated that it had been impossible to recruit a high-quality research group to cover the porcine health topic, and a decision was subsequently taken to abandon this field of research. Given the national size and importance of the pig sector, the committee considers it essential that the FVM adopts a clear strategic position on this domain. This position could involve either rebuilding in-house expertise or explicitly relying on complementary expertise at other institutions. If expertise is expected to reside primarily at Wageningen University or Wageningen Bioveterinary Research (WBVR) or at neighbouring universities with strong veterinary or animal health profiles such as Ghent University, explicit and structured alignment with these partners is needed to ensure that porcine health challenges are adequately addressed at the national level, and that research-based education of the veterinary students at FVM can be ensured.

A related concern, raised by the Faculty Board, is that the scientific skills, and specifically the application of Evidence-Based Veterinary Medicine (EBVM) principles, of primary care veterinarians may be suboptimal. Implementation of clinical guidelines by primary veterinarians is challenging, although essentially all veterinarians in the Netherlands are trained by the FVM. To some extent, this issue may be connected to the perceived suboptimal visibility of veterinary research. However, as the main training institute of almost all Dutch veterinarians, the FVM has the opportunity to address these challenges through training in research skills and EBVM at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, including through continuing education and lifelong learning programmes for veterinary practitioners.

A focus on companion animal health research, in conjunction with consolidating and strengthening ties with primary veterinarians across the country and corporate owners of practices, would potentially be beneficial for all involved.

On multiple occasions during the site visit, the issue arose of how to more objectively monitor progress with respect to strategic measures taken by the Faculty. A systematic (annual) analysis of selected monitoring indicators that the FVM deems important would provide greater insight into the impact of interventions and modifications, helping to determine what works well and what does not, based on objective measures. For example, external funding has increased substantially in recent years, but the cause of this increase remains unclear. As another example, also discussed below, the FVM has done an admirable job in addressing the wellbeing of PhD candidates. It will now be important to monitor possible consequences of the introduction of a dedicated PhD confidential advisor, so that this system can be strengthened and promoted to other faculties if successful and protected in the event of potential funding cuts.

3.2 Research quality

The stated primary scientific ambition of FVM is to “perform robust and groundbreaking research, enhancing the quality of veterinary healthcare and providing knowledge to address global animal, and human health and welfare challenges”.

The committee finds that FVM clearly lives up to its ambition. Within the One Health theme, contributions from researchers across the Faculty are prominent in addressing major global challenges at the interface of animal and human health. These activities demonstrate a strong focus on infectious diseases, public health and comparative biomedical research. However, the committee observed that the current research focus within One Health leans more towards human and, to some extent, animal health, while the environmental and planetary dimensions are less prominently represented.

The contributions are exemplified through multiple case study descriptions and highly cited, internationally recognised collaborative publications. The FVM has increased its research output since



the last assessment report, with researchers publishing 500–651 peer-reviewed journal articles and 24–33 PhD theses annually between 2019 and 2024. This means that the FVM has, despite COVID-19 lockdown challenges during the assessment period, maintained a consistently high quantitative level of research output of approximately two peer-reviewed journal articles annually per full-time equivalent employed staff. Furthermore, the overall quality of publications is high, with 15.6% ranking among the top 10% most cited papers worldwide. A high proportion of publications results from collaboration, with 65% involving international partners and 26% involving external national partners, while around 10% are single-institute outputs. This reflects strong networks and a collaborative research culture, which helps underpin the impact of the research for stakeholders, including clinical practice, industry, advisory services, policymakers, and other research environments.

Not only were the quality and quantity of research outputs from FVM researchers at a high level, but this work has also led to numerous important innovations and knowledge advances of societal relevance, including significant insights into pre-pandemic and pandemic coronavirus variants through new molecular techniques. FVM has focused on important fields such as clinical infectiology and resistance to antibiotics and antiparasitic drugs, while drawing on a strong integration of facilities and expertise across the Faculty. This research constitutes an important priority, as FVM would likely be the only institution in the Netherlands able to study these topics across different species and scales (e.g. from gene expression to the individual pathogen–host to population level).

Against this broader backdrop, the BHS department provides much of the Faculty's fundamental and molecular research capacity. The department contributes strongly to One Medicine and One Health through its work in molecular virology, cancer biology, arthritis research, and infection biology. BHS researchers have played a key role in national and international efforts on zoonotic pathogens, including COVID-19 and highly pathogenic avian influenza, and have made important contributions to understanding antimicrobial resistance mechanisms. Several of these advances have led to highly cited and internationally recognised publications, reflecting the strong scientific standing of the department.

The CS department excels particularly in research on companion animals and translational research, and has multiple highlights of innovations, including genetics of diseases, controlled drug delivery systems and cell-based therapies, and 3D-printed implants and tailor-made horseshoes, patented culturing techniques, advanced *in vitro* models for organ- and tissue biofabrication, and important molecular insights within oncology.

At the PHS department, the focus on research at the population scale includes toxicology and exposure risks, animal welfare and behaviour, the use of sensors and imaging, as well as artificial intelligence and transmission of infections and antimicrobial resistance to promote safer and more humane livestock farming. PHS researchers have also developed an ontology for experimental data on microorganism transmission between hosts, which will enable comparison across future studies from different (international and national) research groups. Environmental health research, such as studies on the health effects of microplastic exposure, further illustrates the department's broad and interdisciplinary impact.

At the Veterinary Microbiological Diagnostic Centre (VMDC), which falls under the Department of BHS, the researchers have access to a large network of veterinary practitioners using FVM's facilities for diagnostics, an important link that could potentially be exploited better to promote broader engagement between stakeholders of FVM research.

The committee noted during the site visit that FVM researchers make an effort to include bachelor and master students in their research although some staff members expressed concern about the very short internships in the current veterinary curriculum and veterinary students' a lack of laboratory skills,



making it challenging to involve this core group of students meaningfully in laboratory-based research activities.

The external income of the FVM has increased substantially during the reporting period, which is an excellent achievement. The research income is derived from multiple sources, including significant fundraising activities by “*Vrienden Diergeneeskunde*”. The committee assumes that part of this increase in external funding has resulted from the activities of the Research Support Office (RSO), the employment of grant writers, and the work performed by departmental research managers. The benefits of a well-functioning RSO, and the support it provides in collaborations, identifying funding opportunities, and preparing research applications, were evident during interviews with the various groups. Although the committee was not provided with a full breakdown of the source and nature of the externally awarded projects, it assumes that the majority of this funding relates to more human-oriented research. With this office in place, it should also be possible to lobby proactively and focus more on animal-oriented science at national and EU levels.

Overall, across the three departments the committee considers FVM veterinary research to be world class. The number of publications remained high during the evaluation period (along with the number of research-active staff members), and the quality of the publications is generally high. Staff members hold leading positions in international research networks, consortia and research projects, societies and committees, and professional organisations.

3.3 Societal relevance

The FVM demonstrates a clear ambition to enhance the societal impact of its research and knowledge. This is reflected in contributions to major societal themes such as infectious disease outbreaks, antimicrobial resistance, food safety, environmental health and sustainability, animal welfare, and animal-free research. The self-evaluation report provides evidence of this engagement, for example through valorisation activities, contributions to policy advice, and active public outreach. To strengthen this ambition structurally, the Faculty has explicitly prioritised societal impact in its 2023–2025 governance agenda, supported by dedicated communication teams and an Impact Taskforce. The TRIPLE model also acknowledges and rewards researchers for focusing on generating societal impact alongside academic achievements, reinforcing the Faculty’s commitment to making its work relevant and accessible to society.

During the reporting period, the FVM has engaged in a number of strategic partnerships, resulting in its participation in several large projects (e.g. the Dutch Growth Fund and EU Horizon projects). With the right stakeholders on board, these partnerships are vital to disseminating scientific insights into practice. FVM scientists have joined a large number of committees that extend beyond the academic domain, and their research output is cited in many policy documents. Several researchers hold advisory roles in influential bodies such as the Dutch Council on Animal Affairs, EFSA, WHO and WOA, reflecting the Faculty’s embeddedness in science–policy interfaces. This indicates wide dissemination and implementation of knowledge produced within the FVM.

Utrecht Holdings and the RSO at FVM assist researchers in valorising their research results. While the overall collaboration was perceived as good, the committee sees opportunities in offering staff training on intellectual property, data management, and business collaboration to further increase awareness about valorisation and the societal relevance of research. For example, the Faculty could consider integrating such training more systematically into career development structures and research assessment frameworks.



The self-evaluation reported examples of actionable insights from science to policy and collaboration with industrial partners to tackle pressing societal questions, such as COVID-19, avian influenza, antimicrobial resistance, and environmental exposure. An increased awareness of the importance of focusing on societal challenges provides a well-appreciated incentive for researchers to contribute to society. Examples of high-impact societal innovations include patents, start-ups (e.g. VirXcel, Equi-Pro®), organoid technologies and DNA tests, demonstrating the Faculty's contribution to practical solutions in veterinary and human health. The FVM has also contributed to legislative and political developments, for example regarding brachycephalic dogs and the EU "End the Cage Age" initiative, illustrating the policy relevance of its research.

Important examples of high-value societal contributions include the Fit2Breed platform and the iPSpine consortium. Due to inbreeding, the prevalence of genetic diseases has increased. Genetic screening is highly relevant for the prevention of many diseases, including chronic lower back pain and hip dysplasia addressed by the iPSpine consortium, as well as various cancers in dogs. Sustained attention to prevention-directed projects is highly important.

Although the FVM's societal relevance is clearly demonstrated in many domains, as noted earlier, the committee also observed that structural research capacity on pigs and other farmed species remains limited. Given that a substantial proportion of veterinarians in the Netherlands work in animal-based food-producing sectors, and considering the societal and European policy relevance of issues such as sustainable livestock production, animal health and welfare, and antimicrobial resistance, the committee considers it important that FVM continues to reflect on how these sectors are represented within its research and educational portfolio. Strengthening this alignment, including consideration of whether additional targeted investments are warranted, would support both national needs and EU-level research and efforts to lobby for improved veterinary research involvement in these areas.

Stakeholders with whom the committee spoke provided a mixed view on collaboration with FVM, which was noted as a point of improvement during the previous evaluation as well. The selection of stakeholders present at the site visit meeting was, in the view of the committee, not sufficiently representative. The committee therefore suggests conducting stakeholder analyses for the various areas that the FVM wants to cover, as well as for the Faculty as a whole, and on specific priority topics where researchers want to make a real impact in society.

The FVM is actively participating in events for the general public. Its investment in social media outreach and a newsletter with a sizable number of readers has paid off with increased exposure in the written press. Fundraising through individual donors and other philanthropic sources raises a substantial amount of money for the benefit of research. Public engagement initiatives such as citizen science activities, exhibitions and participation in science festivals further broaden the Faculty's outreach and visibility. Continuing these ambitions of public outreach, which may be expanded with for example podcasts (a clear trend aside from videos) could further strengthen the legitimacy of the FVM among the general public, which could also help boost alternative funding sources in times of funding challenges. Outreach to policymakers and politicians, either directly or indirectly, should remain on the agenda to stress the importance of FVM's topics.

3.4 Viability

The FVM is the only institution in the Netherlands offering an academic degree in veterinary medicine and is, nationally and internationally, recognised for its high quality of education and research (see 3.2 above). As a result of its monopolistic position, the viability of the educational curriculum of the FVM is not under any threat. However, the research activities of the FVM inevitably compete for financial



resources with many other academic institutes and therefore require clear strategic positioning. During the reporting period, the FVM has considerably increased its external funding for research and should be commended for this achievement. The uniqueness and high quality of veterinary research and education at FVM in the Netherlands provide a sound basis for its future success and viability. However, as recognised by the FVM in its SWOT analysis, there are several developments that may jeopardise further success in the coming years. The committee identified several areas in which the Faculty should strengthen its activities to safeguard its success in the period ahead.

Animals as models for human diseases represent a strength that has contributed to increased research funding at FVM. However, positioning animals merely as models for human disease may, at the same time, weaken funding for animal-specific disease research. The committee suggests exploring alternative funding streams, including philanthropy, foundations, government initiatives, and industry initiatives, while safeguarding academic independence, as this could open novel and more tailored funding opportunities. Such activities would also help increase the external visibility of the veterinary identity of FVM. This observation relates to the limited number of EU programmes with explicit veterinary objectives, emphasising the importance of strengthening the veterinary lobby, most likely in collaboration with other faculties of veterinary medicine across Europe, within the EU. Accordingly, investing in increased visibility and lobbying for veterinary science and animal health at national and EU levels is highly recommended. While these activities may not yield immediate results, embedding veterinary priorities in future funding agendas and policy discussions should expand funding opportunities in the medium and longer term.

A strategically important development for the future viability of the FVM is the increased collaboration with Wageningen University (WUR). The committee was very pleased to see this development, as both institutes are uniquely positioned in the national research landscape and are geographically close. Strengthening this collaboration contributes to the viability of both education and research at FVM. Developing a joint strategic research agenda on animal health, potentially together with Wageningen Bioveterinary Research (WBVR) in Lelystad and practice-oriented partners such as the Royal GD, would further broaden FVM's engagement with a wider range of stakeholders and strengthen its position in the national research landscape. The committee notes that long-term, structured collaborations with these prominent partners, who partly operate in the same scientific domain, could help shape the national, and potentially European, research agenda on animal health.

The committee therefore encourages the FVM to articulate more explicitly how it intends to position itself within these partnerships and what forms of collaboration it aims to pursue. Clearer choices in this regard will not only strengthen the Faculty's strategic positioning but also enhance its long-term viability in an increasingly competitive funding environment.

In the self-evaluation, the FVM acknowledges that it is not sufficiently engaging with the key stakeholder group of practising veterinarians, who are essentially all alumni of the Faculty. As a result, FVM research has only to a limited extent been translated into guidelines and standards for primary veterinary practice. There is a perceived disconnect between veterinarians and researchers within the FVM, which may hamper the future implementation of new findings in practice. Closing this gap could facilitate the uptake of novel research outcomes, thereby improving the viability of the Faculty's research agenda. Research-based continuing education initiatives for private veterinarians could be one way of achieving this.

The committee advises expanding PhD training programmes and including more veterinary-focused course options in fundamental and clinical (applied) animal health research. Some of these courses may be available through other veterinary schools in Europe, and opening opportunities for PhD candidates to participate in such courses, workshops, or summer schools abroad should be encouraged. This would



also increase the visibility of FVM and strengthen engagement within European-funded research programmes.

The Faculty Board appears to have given careful thought to succession planning for retiring academic staff. However, it did not become clear, nor was it discussed, how specific research areas would be prioritised strategically when appointing new group leaders. It will be important to make well-informed and balanced decisions on the use of vacant staff positions, either to support young talent within the Faculty or to recruit staff from outside. Part of this decision relates to the research topics that the Faculty Board chooses to prioritise and further develop.

Finally, it would be important for the FVM to consider a clearer strategy for how animal health-related data science should be developed within the Faculty. This is an area of growing relevance across research communities, and for the viability of the research programme it will be important to determine which investments in data-driven research activities are warranted to keep pace with national and international developments in this field.

3.5 Open Science

The FVM demonstrates a strong and proactive commitment to Open Science. According to the self-evaluation, approximately 99% of the Faculty's scientific publications are openly accessible, which positions the FVM at an exceptionally high level of transparency and is fully aligned with Utrecht University's open-access policy.

The FVM has also made clear progress in strengthening FAIR data practices. Supported by Utrecht University's central data infrastructure, departmental data stewards and dedicated training opportunities, FVM researchers are increasingly equipped to ensure that research data are findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable. Although the self-evaluation notes that data practices have historically varied between departments, ongoing efforts to harmonise procedures and strengthen guidance would contribute to a more coherent and responsible data management culture.

Maintaining this strong Open Science profile will require continued attention to the resources needed for open-access publishing, data stewardship, and training. As publication costs and data requirements evolve, it will be important to ensure that the Faculty has the means to sustain the high level of Open Science it has now achieved. A clear long-term approach to supporting these components will help safeguard the Faculty's current momentum.

Overall, the FVM has established a solid foundation for Open Science, with practices that exceed national expectations and contribute to an open, transparent and responsible research environment.

3.6 Academic culture

The committee gained the impression that the FVM fosters an open and collegial academic environment in which staff at different career stages generally feel able to engage constructively with colleagues and supervisors. Both senior and junior academic staff described a culture that encourages discussion, collaboration, and mutual support, although the committee also noted that experiences can vary between departments.

The Faculty has introduced several initiatives that contribute to a more structured and transparent academic culture. The TRIPLE framework supports conversations about expectations, roles, and career development, and the introduction of differentiated career tracks provides a basis for recognising the strengths and ambitions of individual staff members. Postdoctoral researchers and assistant professors



regarded these elements as helpful. However, they also indicated that implementation differs across departments and that more consistent, faculty-wide support would be beneficial, particularly for postdoctoral researchers nearing the end of their appointment.

Social safety is clearly taken seriously within the Faculty. The committee was encouraged to see that both the confidential adviser and the interpersonal integrity adviser are active and visible, and are appreciated within the community. Their collaboration and regular engagement with research groups support greater awareness of social safety and responsible conduct.

In the area of academic leadership, the committee sees potential for further development. Although the site visit revealed strong examples of good practice, the Faculty would benefit from more structured training initiatives, including for senior staff, that address leadership skills broadly, including team management, communication, and fostering a socially safe environment. Investing in these areas would help ensure greater consistency and clarity of leadership across departments.

Finally, the committee encourages the Faculty to continue developing a more structured approach to monitoring aspects of academic culture, such as social safety, research integrity and inclusion. Better insight into these areas would support more informed decision-making and help identify emerging needs at an early stage.

3.7 Human resources policy

Talent management

FVM leadership described recruitment and retention as not being a major challenge, due to a large pool of internal academic talent and competition for posts within the FVM. The committee considered this to reflect the vibrant, progressive, and healthy academic culture within the FVM overall, as well as its success in developing academics at all levels. However, this situation has also contributed to a lack of cultural diversity among academic staff, as outlined in the next section. The committee commends the policies and resources in place to support and develop FVM staff at all levels and was impressed by the continued exploration of new opportunities for improvement, such as the pilot programme for technical staff development.

A range of policies are in place within the FVM to ensure strategic and adaptive succession planning. This was identified by the committee as vital given the age demographics of staff at Professorial level. The committee emphasises the importance of flexibility in developing new positions around emerging needs, research funding opportunities, and FVM strategy. Although moving posts across departments remains uncommon in practice, the committee encourages maintaining this flexibility available as part of long-term succession planning. In this context, the committee notes that sustainable staffing models, particularly for data experts and technical staff, will be increasingly important to retain critical expertise and avoid structural gaps in support capacity.

A range of FVM/UU policies and resources for career progression, including formal training and development, coaching, and mentoring at an individual level, were evident. The TRIPLE programme was discussed and praised during interviews with many groups as a positive change, improving academic staff's career development in collaboration with their line managers. However, implementation still varies across departments, and the committee encourages more consistent, faculty-wide application.

The committee also recognised the valuable support provided by the RSO, particularly for junior academics. In addition, the support provided for grant writing and the role of research managers as facilitators of research activities were considered excellent in supporting academic progression at all



career stages. Other areas for improved talent management, such as clearer academic career pathways for data experts, were highlighted during departmental-level interviews and should be pursued.

The challenges faced by researchers with clinical veterinary responsibilities were expressed during interviews. Limited protected time for research, due to clinical service requirements and gaps in veterinary cover (e.g. staff illness), was identified as a factor constraining career progression, alongside restricted funding opportunities for some individuals. While these researchers recognised the challenges of balancing clinical duties with the provision of consistent veterinary services and teaching, the ability to work in blocks of protected research time (uninterrupted weeks rather than scattered days or hours) would be beneficial and should be implemented wherever possible. Successful pilots are already running in some research groups, and the FVM is advised to collect and evaluate experiences from these practices.

The committee also noted that protected time is only effective when researchers are able to step away fully from clinical work; however, clinicians are often drawn back into the clinic when their veterinary skills are needed, a challenge that is common across clinical research environments. Creating physical distance from the clinical setting, such as providing dedicated office space away from the clinics, may help staff focus on analytical and writing tasks during protected research periods. The Faculty Board clearly understands the challenges that research active veterinary clinicians face and have actively supported these groups well, reflected through the research activities and outputs. With changes in the funding landscape and programmes available, it is essential that the FVM continue to advocate for research funding to support clinical veterinary academics at national and EU levels.

Postdoctoral researchers appeared to have much less formal support and fewer opportunities for development. While this may partly reflect the relatively short duration of postdoctoral contracts, the support network in place for postdocs at UU and FVM levels was perceived as insufficiently structured and lacking visibility. Barriers to undertaking formal teacher training (Utrecht Teaching Qualification) were outlined during group discussions, with processes within the FVM described as more complex than at comparable institutions. The committee recommends that the FVM seek more practical solutions, particularly for postdoctoral researchers.

Mentoring and development opportunities were largely dependent on the academic line manager. While many examples of positive mentorship were shared, postdoctoral researchers were also aware of instances where this support had been insufficient. The committee discussed the role of department heads in ensuring oversight and consistency in approach and noted the potential benefits of implementing more structured and visible support measures.

Diversity

Diversity and inclusion are recognised by the FVM leadership team as key elements of HR policy and core components of academic culture within the FVM, and active measures are in place to ensure that policies are followed. This is evidenced by all recruitment applications being reviewed by a Diversity & Inclusion-trained Faculty Board, a substantial proportion (44%) of FVM professors being female, and the emphasis placed on diversity during meetings with departments and junior academic staff. The committee discussed the importance and benefits of mandatory, regular, and repeated D&I training for all academics, particularly senior staff, as well as monitoring participation and impact at FVM and UU levels.

A lack of cultural diversity (predominantly white and Dutch) was recognised by the leadership team, with key barriers including Dutch language requirements and the lack of competitive salaries to attract and recruit academics at an international level. Outreach activities undertaken by the FVM have



increased engagement with more culturally diverse members of the local community and represent an important long-term strategy to improve diversity within the FVM, starting at the level of undergraduate admission. During group interviews, the practical challenges faced by non-Dutch-speaking research staff were discussed. While measures are in place to address these challenges (e.g. a warm welcome programme, buddy system, dedicated HR contacts, and Dutch language training courses), some FVM and UU guidelines remain available only in Dutch.

The value of developing Dutch language skills was recognised by both the committee and interviewees as important for integration within the FVM. Such skills are vital for communication with non-English-speaking technical staff and animal owners for those engaged in veterinary clinical work, as well as for long-term academic career development for staff planning to remain within the Dutch system. At the same time, achieving the right balance between Dutch- and non-Dutch-speaking staff is a structural challenge shared by many non-English-speaking countries. Recruiting high-quality international researchers who do not yet speak Dutch is essential for research excellence and diversity. This is also relevant in light of the Faculty's strategic ambition to strengthen its position within European research consortia, as discussed in section 3.4, where international visibility and networks are key to long-term viability. At the same time, sufficient numbers of Dutch-speaking staff remain necessary for roles involving extensive interaction with clients, citizens, and clinical partners. Striking an appropriate balance between these needs therefore remains an important and ongoing challenge.

3.8 PhD policy and training

Selection and admission procedure

New PhD candidates are usually selected following an open vacancy. One or more principal investigators oversee the selection process, which takes place over several rounds. Following the recommendations from the research quality assessment in 2018, FVM has introduced an onboarding day for new PhD candidates. The total number of PhD candidates has increased from 226 in 2018 to 270 in 2024, of whom the majority (180) are affiliated with FVM. Within this group, 166 are employed by FVM: this includes (1) PhD candidates with an employment contract and (2) staff members who are pursuing a PhD alongside their regular position ("employees in a PhD track"). The remaining 14 PhD candidates conduct their PhD project on a scholarship.

Training and education

The education and training of the PhD candidates are coordinated by the Utrecht University Graduate School of Life Sciences (GSLS). The GSLS is the collective responsibility of the deans of the faculty of Medicine (UMC Utrecht), the faculty of Veterinary Medicine (Utrecht University) and the Faculty of Science (Utrecht University). In addition, there is close collaboration with the following non-university/non-UMC research institutes located at the Utrecht Science Park: the Westerdijk Institute, the Hubrecht Institute, and the Princess Máxima Center. This structure ensures that the PhD candidates are well connected to peers at other participating institutions. Furthermore, this collaboration between faculties enables PhD candidates to participate in a wide variety of courses.

Within the GSLS, PhD candidates from the FVM can enrol in one of the 15 available PhD programmes, each comprising 20 credits. The committee welcomed the fact that annual courses on the responsible conduct of research are mandatory for all PhD candidates. However, it was noted that there remains considerable variation in course participation, resulting in differences in training experiences among PhD candidates.



The PhD programmes offered cover a broad range of topics. Nevertheless, the committee learned that veterinary PhD candidates often perceive that the content of these programmes does not optimally support their own PhD trajectories, as the focus is predominantly on human biomedical sciences. Furthermore, some PhD candidates, particularly those not physically located in the FVM main building but in affiliated institutes, expressed that they do not feel strongly connected to the FVM. In line with the ambition of the FVM to preserve its veterinary identity, the committee advises strengthening the relevance of the PhD training framework by incorporating a stronger veterinary perspective and developing tailored courses and/or a programme addressing (clinical) animal health research. During interviews with PhD candidates, it was also suggested that more opportunities could be provided to enrol in courses at other institutions, such as Wageningen University, or to obtain a teaching certification (Utrecht Teaching Qualification).

Quality assurance and supervision

According to the GSLS guidelines, each PhD candidate is required to have a minimum of two supervisors, who bear responsibility for the quality and progression of both the research project and the doctoral thesis. At the beginning of the PhD trajectory, the candidate, together with the supervisory team, establishes a Training and Supervision Agreement (TSA), which formalises agreements concerning training, supervision, and the division of responsibilities. To monitor progress and the quality of supervision, one or two mentors are appointed to provide independent advice to both the candidate and the supervisory team, with at least one consultation per year during the annual progress meeting.

The committee noted, however, that not all PhD candidates have a yearly progress meeting that includes both their supervisory team and mentors. This results in variability in the guidance received and the overall quality of supervision, which may depend on the supervisor's approach. The committee therefore recommends establishing an infrastructure to ensure that progress meetings are conducted and monitored consistently. This is particularly relevant in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, as working from home has become more widely accepted, making it more difficult to identify PhD candidates who may be struggling.

The committee was pleased to learn about the toolkit for supervisors, which is mandatory reading for new supervisors. However, the committee recommends making (re-)training on PhD supervision, responsible conduct of research, and creating a safe working environment a regular mandatory requirement for all established PhD supervisors. Additional suggestions to improve the PhD-supervisor relationship include implementing a 360-degree feedback system for supervisors or interpersonal SWOT analyses. The TRIPLE model provides an opportunity to implement this relatively easily.

The committee was impressed by the availability of the PhD confidential advisor for all PhD candidates who wish to discuss concerns about unsafe situations. Additionally, all PhD candidates are invited to a yearly meeting with the PhD confidential advisor to lower the threshold for sharing concerns and to identify potential issues at an early stage. When more systemic issues arise, there is good contact between the PhD confidential advisor and the interpersonal integrity advisor, who can investigate issues at team or department level. However, the committee notes that many PhD candidates experience a strong sense of dependency on their supervisors, which can make it difficult to address conflicts or concerns openly. While mentors and confidential counsellors are available, they cannot intervene directly in supervisory behaviour, as their mandate is limited. Moreover, when supervisors hold formal managerial positions, such as department heads, the boundaries between management and supervision may become blurred, making it unclear where PhD candidates can safely turn for support. This structural dependency is not unique to this Faculty but reflects a broader challenge within academic culture. Nevertheless, it can have significant consequences for PhD wellbeing and progress.



Success rate and duration

PhD candidates from the FVM require an average of 4.6 years to complete their PhD trajectory, which is somewhat longer than the national average of 4.25 years. A substantial proportion of PhD candidates need additional time to finalise their PhD projects. Among those who started their trajectories seven years ago, 11 candidates (24%) have not yet completed their PhD.

Suggested reasons for this delay include the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and a lack of clarity regarding the requirements for the PhD thesis. Although the university provides clearly formulated definitions, expectations still vary among supervisors. The recent introduction of the completion plan is considered a valuable instrument to support both PhD candidates and supervisory teams in ensuring the timely completion of the PhD research and dissertation. However, compliance with the completion plan appears to depend largely on the individual supervisor and supervisory team, which is not ideal.

Another contributing factor to extended PhD durations is that some candidates combine their PhD trajectory with a veterinary residency (specialist) training programme. These candidates often have limited protected research time, and the progress of their PhD projects may be compromised when they are required to cover gaps in clinical services in order to maintain essential veterinary activities within the Faculty, such as hospital care and diagnostic services (e.g. gross pathology). The committee therefore recommends exploring alternative working schemes for PhD candidates who combine research with veterinary clinical work, allowing for longer uninterrupted periods of dedicated research time without clinical obligations. The committee was pleased to hear that there are already successful pilots in place to test these alternative working schemes and encourages management to evaluate these initiatives.

Guidance to the job market and career perspectives

Utrecht University provides career services for all PhD candidates, including those from the FVM. These services include personal coaching, workshops, online assessments, and instructional videos. A career event was also organised, which was well received by veterinary PhD candidates. In addition, depending on their supervisors, there are regular conversations with PhD candidates about their next career steps.

At present, the FVM does not systematically track the career destinations of its PhD graduates. The committee considers such information valuable for evaluating career outcomes and strengthening the connection with alumni. Therefore, the committee recommends establishing an alumni network, which could serve as an important platform for advocacy and for organising tailored career development events.

Taken together, these measures would not only support PhD candidates' career development but also strengthen their sense of belonging and long-term attachment to the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine.

3.9 Specific questions

In addition to the criteria delineated in the SEP, UU requested that the committee take into consideration a number of supplementary questions and provide its corresponding assessments and recommendations. Several of these matters have already been addressed to varying extents, in the preceding sections. The following section offers additional observations and clarifications, providing further detail where relevant.

1. *To assess the achievements and plans aiming to preserve the identity of veterinary medicine (recommendation in the previous SEP evaluation).*



The FVM is strongly positioned as the only academic veterinary faculty in the Netherlands. The research themes are very well aligned with preserving the identity of veterinary medicine and help bridge gaps between veterinary research and other bioscience research areas, such as One Health and One Medicine. Utrecht University has excellent branding and a strong profile, but there appears to be an opportunity to increase the visibility of the FVM through enhanced stakeholder engagement (e.g. the general public, veterinary practitioners, and animal owners) and by building a stronger FVM alumni community. The local identity of the FVM will likely be further strengthened if all researchers at the FVM are physically located in the new building.

2. *To assess the interaction between (human) biomedical and veterinary research and to advise on how to strengthen it.*

As outlined in Sections 3.1 and 3.2, the research themes provide an excellent starting point, and there is clear evidence of active and successful collaboration between biomedical and veterinary researchers within the FVM. The committee identified several areas for further improvement, including fostering a greater sense of community and “belonging” within the FVM for PhD candidates and academic and technical staff working in research groups physically separate from the Faculty. Shared academic appointments between the FVM and other academic institutions already exist and represent an effective approach to strengthening these interactions. Strong and positive relationships, characterised by mutual respect and a clear willingness to collaborate, have been built by the senior FVM leadership with counterparts at other institutions. The committee considers this ambition and investment in key relationships to be a major strength of the FVM, and continued commitment will help to further realise these goals.

3. *To advise in general how conducting research within research themes can help the Faculty to position the faculty better in academia and society.*

The research themes help guide the ongoing research strategy of the FVM and provide a framework for focusing the work of individual groups, as well as for communicating research findings to the academic community and wider society, both nationally and internationally. There was some evidence that not all FVM staff members, both academic and technical staff, feel equally connected to these themes, which merits attention and echoes observations related to the sense of “belonging” noted above. It is important for the FVM to engage with stakeholders not only to communicate its research activities but also to obtain feedback on areas that stakeholders consider important and that may currently be underrepresented.

4. *To assess the Faculty’s visibility and accessibility among stakeholders, in particular our efforts to improve stakeholder involvement.*

It was difficult to fully assess this aspect during the site visit due to limited representation from what would be considered key stakeholders. These could have included animal owners, veterinary professionals working in companion animal, equine, and farm animal practice, as well as senior representatives of veterinary corporate organisations in the Netherlands. While there was evidence of good public engagement and knowledge exchange in some areas, the committee identified clear opportunities to build on this foundation and to develop much stronger relationships with stakeholders, particularly given that the FVM is the only academic veterinary training facility in the



Netherlands. This is also important to ensure that FVM research remains relevant to stakeholder needs and aligned with societal expectations regarding public funding.

Gaps in certain research areas, for example porcine and vector-borne disease research, have already been highlighted above. The FVM benefits from a strong communications team, which should be further utilised to enhance visibility. Outreach activities are already being undertaken with local communities, including schools; however, the committee also identified opportunities to showcase the FVM more widely, for example through representation at national science-related events. Conducting stakeholder analyses for different themes and priority topics could support more effective engagement beyond reliance on individual academics' scientific or personal networks.

5. *Due to societal changes (e.g. political) we see changes in the funding of research. What is the effect of these changes on our viability and how should the faculty stay well connected to Utrecht Life Sciences?*

Changes in research funding are a challenge across many countries. The FVM management team is fully aware of these developments and is taking steps to address limitations in funding for specific areas, for example companion animal health research, by exploring alternative funding sources. Further development of such approaches, including engagement with philanthropic donors and benefactors with an interest in animal health, provides opportunities to support more applied aspects of veterinary research.

It is critical that the FVM communicates a coherent and consistent message to its stakeholders and continues to strongly advocate for animal health research funding. This includes emphasising the broader societal value of veterinary-trained scientists beyond animal health alone, such as contributions to food security, biosecurity and emerging disease threats, and public health, including the mental and physical health benefits of pet ownership. The committee also highlights the importance of well-funded and sustainable career pathways for academic veterinary clinicians at both national and EU levels. Building stronger relationships with other European veterinary faculties represents an important opportunity to enhance advocacy for applied veterinary and animal health research, for example within EU Horizon schemes, and to support the development of larger collaborative research initiatives and funding applications.

3.10 Conclusions and recommendations

Over the period 2018–2024, the FVM has demonstrated clear and meaningful progress. The restructuring into three departments and the further development of the themes One Health, One Medicine, and Veterinary Biomedicine have contributed to greater internal coherence, strengthened interdisciplinary collaboration, and enhanced the Faculty's visibility within the broader Life Sciences community. The quality and societal relevance of the research are strong, as reflected in scientific output and in the FVM's contributions to major societal challenges such as zoonotic diseases, antimicrobial resistance, regenerative medicine, and sustainable livestock systems.

The committee also observes that the FVM is actively fostering an open, self-aware, and learning academic environment, with explicit attention to social safety, PhD supervision, and talent development. Increased external visibility, active participation in (inter)national consortia, and growth in external funding further illustrate the vitality of the research domain.



The committee concludes that FVM is well positioned for the future and plays an important societal role. Continued consolidation of recent strategic developments, coupled with further refinement and consistent implementation of key choices, will support the FVM in strengthening its long-term impact and resilience.

The committee has formulated several recommendations to further enhance the research and the research environment:

- Continue to strengthen the veterinary identity across the three themes, ensuring good visibility of FVM's veterinary expertise, including animal health, welfare, and clinically oriented veterinary research.
- Further clarify FVM's strategic position within the national veterinary landscape, including opportunities for long-term, structured collaboration with partners such as WUR, WBVR, RIVM, and the Royal GD.
- Reflect on FVM's future role regarding research on porcine health, acknowledging that dedicated research expertise in this area is currently not present within the FVM.
- Given the national size of the porcine sector and FVM's unique position as the Netherlands' sole veterinary faculty, it would be valuable to define clearly what role FVM will play in ensuring that this research and development domain is appropriately addressed at the national level.
- Strengthen the ecological and planetary health components of One Health and sustainability research, aligning FVM's activities more closely with the international One Health High-Level Expert Panel (OHHLEP) definition and evolving global challenges.
- Carry out stakeholder analyses for research topics and themes of interest and use the results to sharpen strategic priorities, improve stakeholder engagement, and guide research choices.
- Enhance the visibility and advocacy of veterinary-trained scientists at national and EU levels through coherent communication efforts and strategic engagement with relevant policy arenas, thereby increasing access to competitive funding opportunities and ensuring stronger representation in future research programmes.
- Support the further advancement of Evidence-Based Veterinary Medicine (EBVM) by enhancing alignment with primary care practice, encouraging the use of international clinical guidelines, and promoting systematic implementation across veterinary domains, including through continuing education and lifelong learning programmes for veterinary practitioners.
- Develop a concise set of monitoring indicators to help assess the effects of strategic measures, including collaboration, research governance, EBVM uptake, wellbeing, visibility, and partnership outcomes.
- Prepare for potential fluctuations in external funding, including EU programmes and the discontinuation of national starter and incentive grants, by exploring diversified and responsible funding opportunities.
- Clarify and support the position and career prospects of postdoctoral researchers, for example through a postdoc network and expanded opportunities for leadership development, peer learning, grant acquisition, and the acquisition of teaching skills.
- Develop clearer career paths and sustainable staffing models for technical staff and data scientists to strengthen long-term expertise and enhance opportunities for professional growth and mobility within the FVM.
- Continue to invest in high-quality supervision, leadership, and social safety, including regular training for supervisors, active monitoring of wellbeing, and embedding psychological safety in everyday academic practice.



- Consider clarifying the FVM's language policy, particularly regarding the use of English and Dutch in research, teaching, and communication, to support coherence, accessibility, and effective collaboration.
- Use the planned new Faculty building as a strategic catalyst to enhance veterinary profiling, physical and intellectual cohesion, research visibility, and collaboration between research, education, and clinical care.



Appendix A - Programme of the site visit

November 2, 2025	
19:00	Dinner Committee
November 3, 2025	
08:45–09:00	Reception / registration
09:00–11:00	Kick-off meeting, internal meeting Committee
11:00–12:00	Interview: Faculty Board
12:00–12:50	Lunch
12:50–13:50	Department of Biomolecular Health Sciences & Life Sciences community
13:50–14:00	Short break
14:00–15:00	Department of Population Health Sciences & Life Sciences community
15:00–15:30	Break
15:30–16:30	Department of Clinical Sciences & Life Sciences community
16:30–17:30	Internal debrief / evaluation of first day
19:00	Dinner Committee
November 4, 2025	
09:00–09:50	Graduate School of Life Sciences; PhD confidential counsellor and integrity advisor
09:50–10:00	Short break
10:00–10:50	Postdocs & Assistant Professors
10:50–11:00	Short break
11:00–11:50	External / societal stakeholders
11:50–12:30	Lunch with PhD candidates
12:30–13:20	Interview: PhD candidates
13:20–13:30	Short break
13:30–15:30	Faculty tour (Science Park locations)
15:30–17:00	Private interim meeting (committee)
17:00–17:30	Presentation of preliminary findings



Appendix B - Quantitative data

B.1 Research staff 2018-2024

	2018			2019			2020			2021			2022			2023			2024		
	#	RFTE	FTE	#	RFTE	FTE	#	RFTE	FTE	#	RFTE	FTE	#	RFTE	FTE	#	RFTE	FTE	#	RFTE	FTE
Full professor	34	24.8	33.1	34	25.3	33.6	30	21.3	31.8	31	19.2	30.6	31	20.8	31.6	33	21.8	32.2	34	21.4	32.0
Associate professor	34	18.6	29.3	32	19.3	29.3	34	20.0	29.6	35	21.8	32.1	40	22.0	33.6	59	30.4	47.6	61	35.0	56.6
Assistant professor	97	52.9	88.9	98	52.9	87.6	95	51.4	85.3	98	50.6	82.4	102	54.3	85.7	103	50.8	76.6	93	48.7	71.5
Other scientific staff	22	13.1	41.0	30	12.1	38.0	26	12.1	33.4	36	12.9	34.0	46	19.1	46.0	49	24.7	54.6	49	25.0	52.7
Total scientific staff	187	109.5	192.4	194	109.5	188.5	185	104.7	180.0	200	104.6	179.0	219	116.1	196.8	244	127.7	211.0	237	130.2	212.8
Postdocs	66	40.4	41.9	69	44.2	45.7	73	46.5	47.3	87	55.6	56.5	86	54.0	54.5	87	57.7	58.7	99	67.4	68.4
PhD candidates	106	82.1	87.6	117	81.2	87.0	117	86.4	94.6	133	99.7	108.3	129	100.7	111.4	135	107.0	116.3	137	102.2	110.3
Total research staff	359	232.0	321.8	380	235.0	321.2	375	237.6	322.0	420	259.9	343.9	434	270.9	362.7	466	292.4	386.1	473	299.8	391.6
Support staff	227	125.0	359.8	219	124.5	359.1	217	125.7	351.0	228	131.2	368.3	243	137.1	384.2	250	144.0	398.0	269	147.2	418.4
Total	586	357.0	681.7	599	359.4	680.3	592	363.3	672.9	648	391.1	712.2	677	408.0	746.9	716	436.3	784.1	742	447.0	810.0

#: Number of individuals involved in FVM research (i.e., headcount)

RFTE: FTE that these individuals had available for research activities

FTE: Total FTE that these individuals had available for research, teaching, and patient care

Other scientific staff: directors, teachers, and junior assistant professors

Support staff: involved in e.g., data management, project management, or fieldwork

B.2 Funding and expenditure (in k€)

	2018		2019		2020		2021		2022		2023		2024	
	K€	%	K€	%	K€	%	K€	%	K€	%	K€	%	K€	%
<i>Funding</i>														
Direct funding (1)	9,997	46.7	10,609	40.1	9,724	36.3	9,128	33.1	10,350	39.4	11,714	30.8	12,582	37.4
Research grants (2)	2,354	11.0	3,182	12.0	2,710	10.1	2,932	10.6	3,934	15.0	3,434	9.0	3,673	10.9
Contract research (3)	9,066	42.3	12,671	47.9	14,321	53.5	15,485	56.2	11,972	45.6	22,872	60.2	17,351	51.6
Total funding	2,1417		264,61		267,55		27,545		26,256		38,020		33,607	
<i>Expenditure:</i>														
Personnel costs	15,767	70.9	16,976	75.4	18,103	75.7	19,367	74.3	21,385	72.8	24,715	73.6	29,098	77.0
Material costs	6,461	29.1	5,533	24.6	5,808	24.3	6,688	25.7	8,006	27.2	8,860	26.4	8,716	23.0
Other costs	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total expenditure	22,228		22,509		23,911		26,055		29,391		33,575		37,814	
Results*	-811		3,952		2,844		1,490		-3135		4,445		-4,207	

(1) The first money stream consists of direct funding provided by the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science. This covers salary costs for permanent staff as well as building maintenance and usage.

(2) The second money stream consists of grants and programmes from national funding bodies, such as the Dutch Research Council.

(3) The third money stream originates from the EU and private partners, including industry, government ministries, and charitable organisations such as Vrienden Diergeneeskunde.

* Results fluctuate because grants are settled after completion of the project rather than at the end of a calendar year. As a result, the balance sheet may be negative at the end of the year. The average result of the balance (2018–2024) is positive.



B.3 PhD enrolment and success rate

Starting year	M	F	Total	Cumulative success rates: PhD candidates finishing within								Obtained PhD		Ongoing		Discontinued	
				4 years		5 years		6 years		7 years		#	%	#	%	#	%
				#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%						
2014	23	25	48	14	29%	27	56%	36	75%	38	79%	44	92%	0	0%	4	8%
2015	14	23	37	18	49%	24	65%	30	81%	30	81%	32	86%	2	5%	3	8%
2016	8	22	30	8	27%	16	53%	21	70%	26	87%	26	87%	1	3%	3	10%
2017	18	30	48	23	48%	31	65%	35	73%	38	79%	38	79%	5	10%	5	10%
2018	19	27	46	13	28%	23	50%	26	57%	28	61%	28	61%	11	24%	7	15%
2019	12	37	49	9	18%	31	63%	34	69%			34	69%	14	29%	1	2%
2020	17	27	44	9	20%	11	25%					11	25%	31	70%	2	5%
total	111	191	302	94	31%	163	53%			160		213	71%	64	21%	25	8%

