

## Utrecht University academics visit the Faculty of Veterinary Science

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Prof Peter van Beukelen and Dr Harold Bok visited the Faculty of Veterinary Science's Onderstepoort Campus from 16 to 18 March. Against the background of the existing MOU with Utrecht University (UU) in the Netherlands, this visit not only reinforced the close ties between the two institutions but also explored even closer collaboration in educational research.

The two academics from UU spent three days at the Faculty to share their expertise on how to introduce different learning methods into the Faculty's current teaching and learning methods. The five workshops were attended by approximately 80 academics from the Faculty's different departments. During the workshops hosted by Prof van Beukelen and Dr Bok, they focused on skills-based/competency-based education that can be introduced into theoretical modules as well as how to optimise skills-based/competency-based education in modules with a clinical focus.

In order to establish a good understanding of the current clinical training practices used at the two institutions, the two academics from UU on the first day had a working lunch with Profs Pete Irons (HOD: Production Animal Studies), Johan Schoeman (HOD: Companion Animal Clinical Studies) and Dr Henry Annandale, Director: Clinical Services in the Onderstepoort Veterinary Academic Hospital (OVAH), which provided a good basis for the three-day visit. They were also taken on a tour of the Faculty, which included a visit to the newly built Skills Laboratory and the OVAH.

On the second day Prof Van Beukelen and Dr Bok focused on the importance of self-directed and active learning, how lecturing staff can motivate and stimulate self-directed and active learning in students, and the difference between contact hours and self-study hours in a packed curriculum. They also made some very useful comments about assessment in a veterinary/veterinary nursing programme and how to design optimal assessment opportunities/exams in theoretical courses. In the fourth workshop they led an important discussion on how well the Faculty's current assessment practices relate to its learning

objectives, programme outcomes and Day 1 competencies. They also introduced and explained a comprehensive design assessment matrix that enhances reliability and validity.

Day 3 focused mainly on the transition between formal undergraduate studies and the veterinary profession and/or the clinical workplace. Discussions revolved around the importance of personal development, reflection and feedback in veterinary education and how these concepts may be incorporated into the curriculum.

As the VetEd Management Team, BVSc and DipVetNurs programme committee members, coordinators of clinical modules, Virtual Programming Lab (VPL) module coordinators, both undergraduate and postgraduate lecturing staff, Faculty student advisers and student representatives were all involved in these workshops, it is believed that the expertise and knowledge shared by the two academics will impact very positively on the future teaching and learning activities of the Faculty of Veterinary Science.

- Author Chris van Blerk and Lesego Teffu