

# FELASA recommendations for the accreditation of laboratory animal science education and training

## Report of the Federation of European Laboratory Animal Science Associations Working Group on Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Science Education and Training

**FELASA Working Group on Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Science Education and Training: T. Nevalainen (Convenor), H. J. M. Blom, A. Guitani, P. Hardy, B. R. Howard & P. Vergara**

FELASA, 58 Great Marlborough Street, London W1 1DD, UK

### Preamble

Article 26 of the Council of Europe Convention, requires that 'Persons who carry out procedures, or take part in procedures, or take care of animals used in procedures, including supervision, shall have had appropriate education and training' (CE 1986). Similarly, Article 14 of EU Directive 86/609/EEC states that 'Persons who carry out experiments or take part in them and persons who take care of animals used for experiments, including duties of a supervisory nature, shall have appropriate education and training' (Official J EC 1986). Both statutes refer to this as 'competence'.

The term competence was initially rather poorly defined and this caused some confusion. The Federation of European Laboratory Animal Science Associations (FELASA) has developed the notion of competencies, and made them clearer and comprehensive. FELASA identifies four categories of competence (FELASA 1995), which are also adopted by the Council of Europe (1993):

Category A—Persons taking care of animals

Category B—Persons carrying out animal experiments

Category C—Persons responsible for directing animal experiments

Category D—Laboratory animal science specialists

FELASA has published guidelines for each of these categories; these have received widespread approval (FELASA 1995, 1999 and 2000). These guidelines list topics and sub-topics which should be taught, (or with which candidates should be expected to be familiar) and propose an appropriate duration of study. As such, this constitutes the first common basis for harmonization of education for those working with laboratory animals in Europe.

However, the FELASA guidelines for education do not address the depth of study or make recommendations for the qualifications of the educators. In order to avoid confusion or inappropriate reference to FELASA guidelines, the FELASA Board established a working group, the remit of which was to consider and, where appropriate, to make recommendations for the delivery of education and training in accordance with the FELASA principles outlined previously. The board envisages that the resulting FELASA accreditation scheme could assure the quality of education and training in laboratory animal science, and in addition promote further harmonization.

This document represents the outcome of that FELASA working group on Accreditation of Education and Training in laboratory animal science. It is proposed that fulfilment of the criteria described in this document, subject to assessment and approval by a FELASA Accreditation Board, would entitle the organization concerned to describe the course as offering 'FELASA Accredited Training' during the period of validity of the approval.

## Scope

This document encompasses all categories of FELASA competence (A–D) as defined by FELASA (1995, 1999, 2000). Only programmes leading to full development of competence in Categories A1, A2, A3, A4, B, C and/or D will be considered for accreditation. In addition, all future FELASA education and training guidelines will comply with this accreditation system. Accreditation may also be considered for programmes already recognized by other well-established non-European bodies in laboratory animal science, on the basis that the FELASA Accreditation Board considers that such programmes will lead to the development of comparable competencies.

FELASA is committed to working globally to secure mutual acceptance of this accreditation system with assured programmes offered by comparable bodies, so as to assist with the development of an internationally recognizable training programme.

Since this proposal is restricted to basic education in laboratory animal science, programmes directed at continuous education are not included, but these may be the subject of future addendums.

## Requirements for accreditation

Organizations seeking to apply for accreditation are requested to complete an application form, which can be downloaded from <http://www.felasa.org>. All submissions must be in English, although teaching material can be provided in the language in which the training is to be delivered. The applicant is required to address each of the

following headings with respect to each course for which accreditation is sought.

### *Documentation of the programme* (5–10 pages)

- (1) Details of the curriculum. Main topics, subheadings (2nd–4th order), giving descriptive examples of, and the time allocated to, each item and detailing any variations from the respective FELASA guideline and explaining the reason for these.
- (2) A statement confirming compliance with national or international regulations or guidelines.
- (3) Teaching methodology: Lectures, case studies, student presentations, discussion, group work, laboratory sessions, hands on work, etc.
- (4) Details of the teaching materials: Syllabus / manual / book, audiovisual aids, computer software, handouts, other.
- (5) The maximum frequency with which the programme will be offered.
- (6) Anticipated number of attendees per course or per programme.
- (7) Number of years for which this course has been offered in its current form.
- (8) Examination records, criteria for assessing competence, evaluation of examination questions.
- (9) Examination / other assignments. Representative examples should be attached.
- (10) Results of course evaluation by students.
- (11) Self-assessment by those responsible for course delivery.
- (12) Other relevant materials unlikely to be readily available to the assessors should be attached.

### *Credentials of teaching staff* (2–5 pages each)

- (1) Details of professional expertise.
- (2) Curriculum vitae, providing relevant information including: job description, list of publications, category of FELASA competence.
- (3) Details of teaching expertise and personal teaching strategy, self-assess-

ment of expertise relating to the topic taught in the programme, student evaluations of individual's performance.

- (4) Background information: Education, experience, organization and institutional support.

## Accreditation process

- (A) Programme issues: process and duration

### *Submission of the application for FELASA accreditation*

The Applicant, i.e. a named representative of the Association, Institute, Company, etc., shall send all pertinent documents to the Chairperson of the FELASA Accreditation Board by e-mail, fax or mail. The Board must receive the application at least 3 months before the applicant wishes the review process to commence. The Board will process only complete applications, and it is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all necessary information and supporting documents are addressed and included.

### *Receipt of the application*

The Accreditation Board will acknowledge receipt of each application in writing and will provide the applicant with an estimate of the duration and course of the accreditation process, including the date by which a decision will be announced.

- (B) Evaluation by the FELASA Accreditation Board

Accreditation involves thorough examination of each application and subsequent discussion within the Accreditation Board. If deemed necessary, the Board may seek clarification or further information from the applicant. Decisions will require a simple majority of voting members of the Accreditation Board.

- (C) Communication of the Accreditation Board decision

As soon as the FELASA Accreditation Board has reached a decision on whether or not to

endorse the application, the Chairperson shall inform the Applicant of the outcome. In the case of rejection the reasons shall be clearly stated in writing. Unaccepted applications, including all details relating to these, will be kept confidentially, by the Accreditation Board. A current list of all categories of FELASA accredited training is maintained on the FELASA web pages (<http://www.felasa.org>). The web pages will, however, show statistics (only) of applications approved or turned down, and presented on an annual basis.

## Review of application and documentation

The review will be based on the criteria laid out under the heading: 'Requirements for accreditation', and will include examination of documentation relating to the programme, the credentials of the teaching staff, background information (education and/or experience) and a course organogram. The Board may seek supplementary information and clarification of any relevant items from the Applicant.

### *Confidentiality*

The FELASA accreditation process will be conducted and maintained in strict confidence. No member of the Accreditation Board shall disclose details of any application. The Accreditation Board will not disclose information relating to its discussions until the final decision has been reached. Only the Chairperson of the Accreditation Board is authorized to contact the applicant during the review process.

### *External expertise*

Should a member of the Accreditation Board feel that any issue arising from the presentation by the Applicant is not within the area of his/her professional competence, the Chairperson may authorize consultation of external experts.

### *Site visits*

The FELASA Accreditation Board reserves the right to conduct site visits on a random

basis, subject to provision of 10 days advance notice. The aim of the site visit will be to provide assurance in each case that Course presentation accords with that approved by the FELASA Accreditation Board.

## Requirements for maintaining accreditation

Accreditation for programmes of training which are delivered over a period lasting less than a year will normally be valid for 5 years. For courses lasting over a year, accreditation will normally be valid for 10 years.

Organizers of each FELASA accredited training and education programme are required to submit an annual (Categories B and C) or a biannual (Categories A and D) report before 31 December each year, declaring adherence to the conditions specified on the application or providing explanations for any deviations. The template for the report can be downloaded from the FELASA web page (<http://www.felasa.org>). The report should be addressed to the FELASA Accreditation Board Chairperson. Failure to submit a report by due date will lead to automatic termination of accreditation.

The report should include information on each of the following:

- (1) Status of the training and education programme
- (2) Dates on which courses have been held
- (3) Teachers participating on each course
- (4) Teaching methodology
- (5) Number of participants on each course
- (6) Results of student evaluation
- (7) Self-assessment of strengths and weaknesses identified, conclusions drawn and actions taken
- (8) Deviations from the application and any other relevant information

Significant, unauthorized deviation from the programme approved, staff delivering the course, teaching methodology, etc, could be sufficient cause for withdrawal of accreditation. It is strongly advised that all deviations should be reported with detailed justification so that the Accreditation Board can decide on a case-by-case basis. It is anticipated that

courses (content, teaching methodology, etc) will be continuously evaluated and, where appropriate, modified in light of experience and the comments from participants. In many cases new ideas should be evaluated by introduction to a training programme before formal approval is sought to amend the accredited programme.

If it is proposed to introduce major changes to improve the quality of the learning experience on an accredited programme, a detailed proposal should be submitted to the Chair of the Accreditation Board before these are implemented, so that the Accreditation Board can give them prior consideration and, if appropriate, approval. This requirement is independent of the obligation to submit an annual progress report.

If the Accreditation Board decides that accreditation will be terminated, this decision will be communicated to those responsible for the programme and to the Institution.

### *Renewal*

After a period of 5 years (10 years in the case of programmes lasting more than one year), FELASA Accreditation will lapse and providers of training programmes must submit a new application if continued Accreditation is required.

## FELASA Accreditation Board

The Accreditation Board consists of a Convenor and four members, together with one corresponding liaison member from each country from where applications are assessed. All must be members in good standing of a FELASA member association. The liaison officer has no voting rights, is not necessarily present in board meetings, and his/her role is to facilitate connection between the applicant and the Accreditation Board.

The names of suitable nominees should be proposed by constituent Member Associations, and from these the FELASA governing board will choose a Convenor and the Accreditation Board. A member, whose own programme is being reviewed, may not participate in the accreditation process. The

remaining members will reach decisions by a majority vote. The FELASA Accreditation Board will be appointed for 4 years: initially two members will be appointed for 2 years only and thereafter half of the members will be replaced every 2 years. The FELASA Governing Board has the authority to replace individual members and dissolve the Accreditation Board if it so determines.

The FELASA Accreditation Board has authority to decide on whether or not to accredit programmes on behalf of FELASA. The Accreditation Board will maintain up-to-date records of programmes accredited, and this will be a public document and will be shown on the FELASA web page (<http://www.felasa.org>).

## Fees

The FELASA Accreditation programme is a non-profit making venture, but is required to be economically self-supporting. In addition to this a modest income may be produced to support FELASA education activities, or to waive or reduce accreditation fees of courses in less wealthy countries.

Applications for accreditation will be processed only after an application fee has been received. Initially, the fee for Categories A3, A4 and D is double the fee for Categories A1, A2, B and C. The Accreditation Board will propose a scale of fees annually to the FELASA board. The fee is non-refundable, irrespective of the outcome of the accreditation application. The application fee is independent of the number of courses given annually, but is category-specific.

Members of the FELASA Accreditation Board will not receive remuneration, but any

direct costs incurred by secretarial requirements or travel will be reimbursed. The Accreditation Board will prepare an annual budget for approval by the FELASA Governing Board.

## References

- Council of Europe (1986) *European Convention for the Protection of the Vertebrate Animals used for Experimental and other Scientific Purposes*. Article 26, Strasbourg
- Council of Europe (1993) 'Resolution on Education and Training of Persons Working with Laboratory Animals' adopted by the Multilateral Consultation on 3 December 1993, Strasbourg
- FELASA (1995) FELASA recommendations on the education and training of persons working with laboratory animals: Categories A and C. Reports of the Federation of European Laboratory Animal Science Associations Working Group on Education accepted by the FELASA Board of Management. *Laboratory Animals* 29, 121–31 (also available at: <http://www.lal.org.uk>)
- FELASA (1999) FELASA guidelines for education of specialists in laboratory animal science (Category D). Report of the Federation of European Laboratory Animal Science Associations Working Group on Education of Specialists (Category D) accepted by the FELASA Board of Management. *Laboratory Animals* 33, 1–15 (also available at: <http://www.lal.org.uk>)
- FELASA (2000) FELASA recommendations for the education and training of persons carrying out animal experiments (Category B). Report of the Federation of European Laboratory Animal Science Associations Working Group on Education of Persons Carrying out Animal Experiments (Category B) accepted by the FELASA Board of Management. *Laboratory Animals* 34, 229–35 (also available at: <http://www.lal.org.uk>)
- Official Journal of the European Council (1986) Legislation. L358; Volume 29. 86/609/EEC; Article 14. Strasbourg