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(MSTAH)

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

This course is organised by the Department of Animal Health (DAH) of the ITM whose mission is to generate, distribute and apply scientific knowledge on tropical diseases in livestock for the improvement of human health and well-being in developing countries. The department counts four research units: protozoology (including vectors), helminthology, animal disease control and epidemiology.

2. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this Master course is to contribute to the prevention and control of animal diseases in the tropics, the development of a sustainable and healthy livestock production and thus improve food security and food safety for men. The practical and theoretical training will enable the participants to rationally analyse epidemiological situations and manage veterinary research and development programmes with a focus on animal disease control projects.

Although the MSTAH course aims at conveying practical and managerial skills to its students, its general orientation is academic and initiates students in the conduct and application of scientific research. It targets an international audience of professionals involved in the disease control or research of husbandry animals in LMIC. The course does not provide biological or clinical training for veterinary practitioners.

3. COURSE PROGRAMME

The MSTAH is organised in collaboration with several Belgian and foreign universities and with the help of experts from the European Union, veterinary research institutes and consultancy firms.

The whole training course represents 60 ECTS credits and has 3 main components:

1. The common part counts for 12 credits and consists of three core modules: Research Methodology, Project Cycle Management and Global Livestock Development.
2. The second part counts for 25 credits and consists of 2 options of equal length allowing the participant to adapt the programme to specific personal needs. Candidates choose between:

Option 1: Collection and processing of epidemiologic data generated by surveys, epidemiological studies or research work. It includes following modules: Introductory statistics and epidemiology; Survey methodology; Geographical information systems; Risk analysis and Epidemiology of specific disease situations.

Option 2: Control of animal diseases and important zoonoses. This option includes the following modules: Laboratory diagnosis; Vector-borne disease control; Infectious disease control; Helminth control and Epidemiology of specific disease situations. The module "Epidemiology of specific disease situations" is part of both options to stimulate interaction between the two groups.

3. The third part of the MSc programme consists of personal research work, carried out under the guidance of a supervisor. The resulting thesis is defended before an examination board and counts for 23 ECTS credits. The work will often encompass the application of techniques acquired during the training. Participants are encouraged to work for their MSTAH project on data, obtained from a particular situation in their home country. The Department of Animal Health or other research institutes may also put relevant data at their disposal.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The overall objectives of the core modules are to:

- Give the students the knowledge and tools required to manage data and present results of research activities;
- Strengthen the participants' planning, management and evaluation skills in participative and sustainable livestock development programmes or veterinary research projects in the tropics;
- Provide the necessary tools to understand issues of food safety, globalisation and commercialisation in the context of sustainable livestock development in low and middle income countries.

The second part of the training:

The objectives of the option "Collection and processing epidemiologic data" are to:

- Provide candidates with the necessary tools to analyse experimental and epidemiological data, interpret results reported in the literature and design simple studies;
- Increase the skills of the students in survey design and survey data analysis;
- Allow candidates to perform a detailed risk analysis in the context of veterinary epidemiology;
- Make the participant familiar with the use of geographical information systems, so that his or her skills to understand epidemiological processes and to elaborate decision making support systems are enhanced;
- Apply the theory acquired in epidemiology, diagnosis and disease control on a specific case study.

The objectives of the option on "disease control" are to:

- Familiarise the students with serological and molecular based techniques and the principals of good laboratory practice;
- Provide candidates with basic epidemiological knowledge;
- Provide basic knowledge and technical skills to improve integrated control of vector-borne diseases, in particular those transmitted by ticks or tsetse flies;
- Familiarise the participants with selected infectious diseases to allow them to collaborate actively and efficiently in a control programme;
- Provide an introduction to the control of helminth infections of economic or public health importance in the tropics;
- Allow candidates to apply the theory acquired in epidemiology, diagnosis and disease control on a specific disease situation.

THE THESIS

Students attending the MSTAH programme are required to independently design and undertake a research project, resulting in a thesis, which they have to defend before an examination board. The work will often encompass the application of techniques acquired during the training, but a critical review of the literature on a selected topic or a strategic report on a livestock issue might equally be acceptable. Participants are encouraged to work for their MSTAH project on data, obtained from a particular situation in their home country. The Department of Animal Health or other research institutes may also put relevant data at their disposal.

4. TEACHING METHODS

A mixture of teaching methods is used during the training. Coached self-study is an integral part of the course and problem solving exercises as well as case studies are organised to strengthen the planning and policy skills of the participants.

5. EVALUATION AND DIPLOMA

Written, oral as well as practical exams are organised at the end of each module to assess achievement of learning outcomes. Some modules use a continuous assessment through coursework and home assignments to monitor the student's progress. At the end of the academic year students present and defend their thesis before an international jury.

6. THE DURATION OF THE COURSE

For those attending the full MSTAH-course training starts mid-September and ends mid-July.

7. ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Candidates must have a degree in veterinary medicine, biology, agricultural or zoological sciences, bioengineering or equivalent. Applicants who completed their university studies in another language than English or French may be asked for proof of knowledge of the course language. Those attending the French course must also possess a working knowledge of English. The maximum number of students admitted to the course is 25 of whom a maximum of 4 will be originating from industrialised countries.

Applications forms are available at the course secretariat or can be downloaded from www.itg.be and must be returned before March 31st for students applying for a scholarship from the Directorate General of Development Co-operation (DGCD) or before July 31st for other candidates.

Those wishing to attend only one or several specific modules should contact the course coordinator before the start of the academic year to check whether they meet the requirements and get the timetable for the module they want to attend. Fees accounts to 370 Euro per course week.

8. ACCREDITATION

The MSTAH is internationally accredited through the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation (www.nvao.net)

9. TUITION FEE AND SCHOLARSHIPS

You will find information on the exact fee and scholarships in the general ITM course overview* and on our website or you can contact the ITM Student Service at education@itg.be. Students from developing countries and the European Union are eligible for a scholarship through the ITM.

For this international Master course a supplement to the tuition fee (see table) includes a subsidised portable computer with wireless technology (market value approx. 1300 Euro). This is an initiative of the ITM to promote ICT compatibility between students and the Institute's hotspots and e-environment. All ITM fellowships will include this feature and we advise other funding agencies to do the same. The PC remains the property of the student.

The registration fee should be paid into the ITM's account nr. 220-0531111-72 (Fortis, Warandeborg 3, 1000 Brussel), BIC/SWIFT: GEBABEBB, IBAN BE 38 2200 5311 1172. Bank charges are at the expense of the applicant.

10. RIPROSAT: ALUMNI NETWORK

The alumni association RIPROSAT stimulates contacts between the former participants and the Department of Animal Health. The association publishes two newsletters per year and offers a book service. The lecturers of the ITM are available for scientific advice. RIPROSAT also support national and regional meetings of local alumni associations.