

12 June 2020

Email : president@rcvs.org.uk

Website : www.rcvs.org.uk

Dear Veterinary Student

Re: Temporary changes to EMS regulations, to support veterinary students during the Covid-19 pandemic

Further to my letter of 7 April, I'm writing to update you on temporary changes to EMS requirements in response to the emerging COVID-19 situation. Following on from the changes to requirements for 4th and final-year students, we agreed to keep the situation under review for all remaining students. I can now inform you about further measures that have just been agreed by the RCVS for students currently in years 1 and 2, and offer a further update for those of you currently in your 3rd year of study.

First, I would like to thank you for your patience in waiting for this next announcement. I appreciate that it has been an incredibly difficult time as the situation with the pandemic has continued, even without the added pressure of the uncertainty over your EMS requirements. I hope that these latest measures will offer you some reassurance.

Pre-Clinical EMS requirements for current 1st and 2nd years

For those of you currently in your 1st or 2nd year of study, it is appreciated that that you may have completed variable amounts of your 12 weeks' pre-clinical animal handling EMS. Although some may have already completed the majority of the requirement at the point when restrictions were introduced, others may have several weeks yet to complete. We have therefore been exploring the possibility that online resources could be used to supplement the remaining opportunities for 'hands-on' experience during the pandemic, and contribute to the further development of animal-handling skills.

All of the veterinary schools have supported this initiative, and I am pleased to inform you that a decision has been taken to reduce the number of weeks of pre-clinical EMS you will be expected to complete by up to 50%, providing you supplement this with appropriate online learning. Therefore, the minimum number of required weeks' pre-clinical EMS that will be expected to be completed on placements will be 6 weeks. Any remainder of weeks can be made-up using the online resource. It is intended that these resources could supplement areas in which you have not, or will not, be able to gain further experience before moving into your clinical years. For example, if you have already completed an EMS placement involving lambing, but not in equine practice you will be able to complete a module online on equine husbandry.

The modules are being developed in collaboration with the veterinary societies for each species, using content / videos directly relating to animal handling, e.g. exploring examples of situations that may arise, and outlining what to do, and what not to do, in these circumstances. The intended

learning outcomes for the resources will be available to you in advance so that you can consider these against your own requirements and priorities, and choose to use the online EMS that would be most helpful to complement your existing experience / EMS completed to date, as agreed with your tutors.

The full details about these modules will be communicated to you by your school once they have been published. Other existing online resources can also be used, providing the content relates directly to animal handling and husbandry.

Clinical EMS requirements for current 3rd years

At this time, we have yet to take a decision regarding changes to the requirements for the current 3rd years, who will soon be moving into their 4th year. We do appreciate that it would be incredibly difficult to meet the usual requirement and it is unlikely that you will be able to complete the necessary weeks, with placements over Easter already having been cancelled and summer placements being uncertain.

We will be monitoring the situation around the availability of placements and what it will look like in the coming months and further into the future before we can make a judgement on what action is best to be taken. Once we have a clearer idea of the EMS opportunities available and what is realistic to expect you to be able to do within the remaining time of your degree programme, we will make a decision on further temporary changes to EMS policy. This is likely to be prior to the start of the first semester in September 2020.

In terms of the immediate future, we are aware that some providers may be keen to recommence with placements over the summer. For those of you that may have placements booked, we would recommend that you liaise both with your school and the placement provider to ensure it is safe and appropriate for the placement to take place before it is undertaken. We would not wish to put pressure on you to undertake a placement if you are concerned that it would be unsafe at this current time, and there is no obligation to do so if you have any worries about it.

Finally, I would like to thank you for your continued patience, and I hope that this update can help to ease your concerns.

Any further updates, as ever will be posted on the RCVS website www.rcvs.org.uk, and communicated to you via your school.

I wish you well and hope you are keeping safe in this most strange of times,



The table below summarises the temporary changes put in place for each current cohort of students:

Year 5	Students graduating in 2020 were unlikely to be able to complete their full EMS requirements of 38 weeks. Council decision (16 March 2020) that they will not be required to make up these weeks prior to graduation, <i>providing they have undertaken a minimum of 30 weeks.</i>
Year 4	Students should not be prevented from graduating providing that they have completed their 12 weeks pre-clinical EMS and at least 50% (13 weeks) of clinical EMS, in addition to demonstration that they have achieved all RCVS Day One Competences.
Year 3	Decision regarding changes to be kept under review and changes proposed following gathering of evidence regarding emerging EMS opportunities.
Year 2	Current requirement of 12 weeks pre-clinical EMS still stands, however up to 50% of the requirement can be completed through appropriate online resources, tailored to the students individual learning objectives. This arrangement should only be relied upon where no hands-on opportunities are available due to the restrictions.
Year 1	Current requirement of 12 weeks pre-clinical EMS still stands, however up to 50% of the requirement can be completed through appropriate online resources, tailored to the students individual learning objectives. This arrangement should only be relied upon where no hands-on opportunities are available due to the restrictions.