### Meeting
| Standards Committee |

### Date
28 September 2016

### Title
Committee profiles and appointment process

### Classification
Unclassified

### Summary
The President is keen to move towards a skills matrix approach to guide the appointment of committee members. This paper makes proposals for such an approach, which was discussed by Operational Board at its meeting on 15 September. The Board broadly supported the overall approach, although it was keen to ensure that committees retain sufficient breadth of experience and made the point that there will always be a need to understand the background of any potential members. The matrix should be seen as a guide, not a ‘straightjacket’.

Standards Committee is asked to consider the proposals, the skills matrix and any gaps in membership and provide comment in order to inform a final version of the proposal to be agreed by Council in November (Education Committee will also be asked to consider this paper).

### Decisions required
Standards Committee is invited to:
- consider and comment on the proposals;
- comment on the proposed skills matrix and suggest any amendments;
- consider where gaps exist and the best way of filling these, e.g. by appointment of new members or by co-opting relevant expertise, taking into account the need for some continuity of membership, in order to ensure that sufficient ‘corporate memory’ is retained.

### Attachments
Annex A: Draft Skills Matrix

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Future skills profile of RCVS Committees

Introduction

1. It has long been usual practice for most RCVS committees to be predominantly comprised of Council members, although some sub-committees do have a wider membership, with appointments being made on the basis of particular skills and knowledge.

2. With future changes to the governance structure of the RCVS, moving towards a smaller Council, and also the need to ensure that committee members have the skills and knowledge that the RCVS needs to deliver on its strategy, both now and in the future, there is a need to consider the skills mix that is required by each committee and the way in which committee members are appointed.

3. The President is keen to move towards a skills matrix approach to guide the appointment of committee members. This paper makes proposals which were considered by Operational Board at its meeting on 15 September and now need to be discussed by both Standards and Education Committees, with a view to producing a final version of the proposal to be agreed by Council in November.

Skills required by each committee

4. The attached annex provides a first draft of a skills matrix as a starting point for discussion for Standards Committee and Education Committee. Whilst there is likely to be some commonality of requirement across both committees, it is also likely that there will be differences in emphasis and priority and it is important that each committee has the right mix of skills to fulfil their specific remits.

5. Each individual committee is invited to discuss the knowledge and skills mix that it needs and then identify any gaps that it feels it has. This should not be seen as a ‘one-off’ exercise: the skills matrix will need to be checked at least annually to ensure that the right expertise is available for the work being undertaken.

Appointing committee members

6. Once a skills matrix has been agreed and each committee has set its priorities within this, appropriate members will need to be appointed to fill any gaps. As mentioned above, traditionally, committees have been drawn largely from the membership of Council. Whilst it makes sense that Council members with appropriate skills should continue to Chair and/or serve on RCVS committees, the recent thinking that not every Council member needs to do so seems sound and should continue. This will allow an appropriate balance between the objectivity of Council as a final arbiter and decision-maker on many issues and coherence in thinking throughout the committee structure as a whole.

7. It is also suggested that the annual round of Presidential appointments to committees is not best practice in governance terms and will become increasingly difficult to sustain as Council reduces its numbers over the next few years.

8. In order to ensure that the College has access to the expertise it needs to meet the challenges of the future, there is a real need to widen the pool of potential committee members and begin to bring in ‘new blood’: as mentioned above, some sub-committees have made appointments based on agreed skills gaps and have consequently brought in members with wider experience and different perspectives, which has greatly enhanced the quality of debate and decision-making.

9. It is suggested that:
• where skills/knowledge gaps exist, committee vacancies should be advertised more widely and appointments made on the basis of application rather than nomination
• consideration be given to including non-veterinary professionals as committee members, provided that they have the right skill-set
• consideration be given to greater use of co-opted, non-voting members with particular expertise for limited time periods, which would allow access to appropriate knowledge without the need to increase committee size or lose continuity of committee membership.

Next steps

10. This paper has been discussed by Operational Board, which broadly supported the overall approach, although it was keen to ensure that committees retain sufficient breadth of experience and made the point that there will always be a need to understand the background of any potential members. It is important that the matrix is seen as a guide and not a ‘straightjacket’.

11. Standards Committee is invited to:

• consider and comment on the proposals;
• comment on the proposed skills matrix and suggest any amendments;
• consider where gaps exist and the best way of filling these, e.g. by appointment of new members or by co-opting relevant expertise, taking into account the need for some continuity of membership, in order to ensure that sufficient ‘corporate memory’ is retained.
## Standards Committee

### Members of Committee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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### Skills required

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<th>Academic</th>
<th>Proficiency</th>
<th>Interest in applying skill or knowledge</th>
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<td>(X,Y)</td>
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### Business

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### Government

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### Lay

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<th>Leadership</th>
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<th>Small animal</th>
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<tbody>
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### Proficiency rating is expressed as (X)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Application of skills/knowledge (Y)</th>
<th>Interest</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X = Person’s level of skill or knowledge</td>
<td>Lay person</td>
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<tr>
<td>Y = Level of responsibility applying the skill or knowledge</td>
<td>Veterinary professional</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Skill or knowledge level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0 = No capability</th>
<th>1 = basic level of capability</th>
<th>2 = intermediate level of capability</th>
<th>3 = advanced level of capability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 = must work under supervision</td>
<td>1 = can work independently with little or no direct supervision</td>
<td>1 = is interested in applying this skill or knowledge</td>
<td>3 = can manage others applying the skill or knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 = has no interest in applying this skill or knowledge</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Meeting</strong></th>
<th>Standards Committee</th>
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<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
<td>28 September 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Title</strong></td>
<td>Practice poster: the veterinary professional / client relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Classification</strong></td>
<td>Unclassified</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Summary</strong></td>
<td>The RCVS has been asked to consider endorsing or producing a practice poster outlining the mutual responsibilities in the veterinary surgeon / client relationship.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Decisions required</strong></td>
<td>To consider the draft poster and provide feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Attachments</strong></td>
<td>Annex A: Draft poster produced by Arlo Guthrie (vetsurgeon.org)</td>
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<td>Annex B: Draft poster created by the RCVS</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Authors</strong></td>
<td>Laura McClintock</td>
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<td>0207 202 0735</td>
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Practice poster: the veterinary professional / client relationship

Background

1. Recently, the editor of vetsurgeon.org, Arlo Guthrie, contacted the RCVS to say that a veterinary surgeon had shared a poster on the forum, which he had seen in a French veterinary practice. The poster outlined the mutual responsibilities in the veterinary surgeon / client relationship. The veterinary surgeon involved also shared the idea with the RCVS.

2. Arlo Guthrie commented that often disagreements between practices and their clients are caused by a poor communication about what each side expects from each other and suggested that a poster outlining the mutual expectations would be helpful. Arlo created a draft poster for UK practices and published this on both vetsurgeon.org and vetnurse.co.uk. He reports that the response from the profession was very positive. A copy of the draft poster is attached at Annex A.

3. The RCVS has now been asked to either endorse this poster or to consider creating our own version, using the existing poster for inspiration.

Issues to consider

4. Given that the aim of any such poster is to outline some of the key standards expected from the profession, we think it is important for the Standards Committee to be involved in this discussion.

5. Following on from the Vet Futures project, the RCVS has already committed to carrying out some strategic work looking at how to promote the value of veterinary care and improving public understanding of costs etc. While creating new material such as a practice poster might be carried out as part of this wider project, there is an argument that by doing something now the RCVS would be seen to respond quickly to issues affecting the profession.

6. As to the poster itself, the Committee may decide that it is more appropriate for the RCVS to create its own version, with the correct language and content, rather than endorsing material designed by a third party. Additionally, the RCVS sets standards for the profession (not the public) so any poster will need to reflect this carefully.

7. The draft poster created by Arlo Guthrie does not recognise the important role of veterinary nurses. Although there may be some subtle differences, it would seem appropriate to explain to the public the key standards they can expect from their veterinary nurses. As such, it may be possible to produce a poster which recognises both sets of expectations.

8. A possible revised draft of the poster is attached at Annex B. Standards Committee is asked to consider this draft and provide feedback.
Dear client

Ensuring the long term health of your animal can only be achieved through a good working partnership between you and your veterinary surgeon. It is a partnership we value, and for our part, the wellbeing of your animal is our absolute priority.

For this partnership to flourish, it’s important we have a clear understanding of what we expect from each other, and where the responsibilities lie:

Our obligations

We are regulated by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons Code of Professional Conduct, which requires that:

- above all, our constant endeavour will be to ensure the health and welfare of animals committed to our care.

- we only prescribe medicines for animals which we have physically examined recently enough to have personal knowledge of the current condition of the animal

- we prescribe medicines which are licensed for veterinary use over, for example, sometimes cheaper alternatives licensed only for human use.

- we provide emergency first aid and pain relief for animals 24/365. Outside our normal working hours, emergency care is available to our clients by ringing the usual practice telephone number.

Your obligations

Under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, you are responsible for ensuring (amongst other things) that you take reasonable steps to protect your animal from pain, suffering, injury or disease.

We’re here to help you meet that obligation.

- Act promptly if you have a concern about your animal’s health. If in doubt, ring the practice. We’ll only recommend you make an appointment or get immediate help if we think it absolutely necessary for the wellbeing of the animal.

- Please follow the advice we give you. Give medication as directed, for as long as directed.

- When necessary and possible, we do make home visits to attend sick animals. However, it is almost always preferable to see the animal at the practice, where we have access to the full range of equipment, medicine and facilities. Ultimately, it is your responsibility to transport your animal to a place where it can receive medical attention, even in an emergency. Please give some thought as to how you can do this before an emergency happens.

- Please ensure that you have the means to pay for the medical care of your animal. Unlike the NHS, we are reliant on prompt payment in order to provide the staffing and equipment needed to treat all the animals under our care. Please think about this before deciding whether to own an animal in the first place, and consider whether you need the safety net of insurance to cover treatment for unexpected medical problems.
The veterinary professional / client partnership

Ensuring the long-term health of your animal can only be achieved through a good working partnership between you and your veterinary practice. For this partnership to flourish, it is important that you and your veterinary professional understand what to expect from each other.

What to expect from your veterinary professional

Veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses are regulated by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, and the RCVS Codes of Professional Conduct set out the professional responsibilities expected of them. Your veterinary professionals must:

• make animal health and welfare their first consideration when attending to your animals and provide appropriate and adequate veterinary care

• take steps to provide 24-hour emergency first aid and pain relief, either personally or through another dedicated provider, and supply full details about this service

• prescribe, supply and administer medicines responsibly, but they cannot prescribe medicines unless they have seen your animal recently enough to have personal knowledge of its condition

• provide you with appropriate information about the practice, including the costs of services and medicines.

• communicate effectively with you and seek your consent for treatments or procedures

• keep information about you or your animal confidential unless animal welfare or the public interest may be compromised

• maintain a healthy and safe practice, with appropriate equipment and facilities as set out in the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme

• respond promptly, fully and courteously to any complaints or concerns that you raise

In return, we ask that you support your veterinary professional by doing the following:
• understand and meet your responsibilities as an animal owner under the relevant animal welfare legislation, which includes protecting your animals from pain, suffering, injury and disease

• register all of your animals with appropriate veterinary practices

• act promptly if you have any concerns about your animals’ health. If in doubt, contact your veterinary professional

• be open and transparent with your veterinary professional so they can provide you with appropriate advice

• follow any advice or instructions given by your veterinary professional and ask for further explanation if you are unsure how to do this

• familiarise yourself with the practice’s out-of-hours arrangements, especially as these may not be located at the usual practice premises

• think in advance about how you will transport your animal to the practice in an emergency situation

• make arrangements to cover to the costs of veterinary care and consider taking out pet insurance to help with any unexpected costs