Council Meeting

Thursday, 14 June 2018 at 10:00 am to be held at the RCVS, Belgravia House, 62/64 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2AF

Agenda

1. President’s introduction
   Oral report

2. Apologies for absence
   Oral report

3. Declarations of interest
   Oral report

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2018
   Refer to Council minutes

5. Matters arising
   a. Obituaries
      Oral report
   b. Council correspondence and matters for report
      Oral report
   c. CEO update
      Unclassified

6. Matters for decision by Council (unclassified items)
   a. Council / Committee structure (following LRO)
      Unclassified
   b. Brexit contingencies and Brexit principles update
      Unclassified

7. Reports of committees – to note
   a. Audit and Risk Committee (and annual report)
      i. Minutes of the meeting held 25 January 2018
         Confidential
      ii. Minutes of the meeting held 25 April 2018 (draft)
         Confidential
      iii. Annual report
         Unclassified
         (Ms E Butler)
   b. Education Committee
      (Professor S Dawson)
      Unclassified
   c. Standards Committee
      (Dr K A Richards)
      Unclassified
   d. Veterinary Nurses Council
      (Mrs E K Cox)
      Unclassified
   e. PIC / DC Liaison Committee
      (Ms A K Boag)
      Unclassified
8. **Reports of statutory committees – to note**
   a. Preliminary Investigation Committee (and annual report)  
      (Mr R A Ash)  
      Unclassified
   b. VN Preliminary Investigation Committee  
      (Ms S K May)  
      Unclassified
   c. Disciplinary Committee and VN Disciplinary Committee (and annual report)  
      (Mr I R Green)  
      Unclassified

9. **Notices of motion**  
   Oral report

10. **Questions**  
    Oral report

11. **Dates of future Council meetings**  
    Oral report

12. **Retirements from Council**  
    Oral report

13. **Dates of next meetings**
    Thursday, 27 September 2018 at 10:00 am (reconvening in afternoon 2:00 – 4:00 pm)
    Thursday, 1 November 2018 at 10:00 am (reconvening in afternoon 2:00 – 4:00 pm)

**AFTERNOON SESSION: 1:30 – 4:00 pm (TO BE HELD IN COMMITTEE)**

14. **Matters for decision by Council (confidential items)**
    Oral report / Confidential
    a. Estates Strategy - update
    b. Annual accounts 2017
    c. 2019 Registration and retention fee and draft budget
    d. Digital Strategy – summary
    e. Funding for Veterinary Evidence (RCVS Knowledge)
    f. Graduate Outcomes initial proposal – draft
    g. Lay recruitment (on Council following LRO)

Private / Confidential  
TO BE TABLED

15. **Any other College business**
    Confidential
    a. Discretionary Fund – report
    b. Activities in remembrance of Sarah Brown

16. **Risk Register, equality and diversity**  
    Oral report
Dawn Wiggins
Secretary, RCVS Council
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Council Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 8 March 2018 at the RCVS, Belgravia House, 62/64 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2AF

Members:
Professor S A May (President in the Chair)
Mrs E Acaster
Dr C J Allen
Professor D J Argyle*
Mr C T Barker
Mr D J Bartram
Ms A K Boag
Dr K Braithwaite*
Professor E Cameron
Mr D F Catlow
Dr D S Chambers
Dr N T Connell
Mr R Davis
Professor S Dawson
Dr M A Donald
Mrs J M Dyer
Professor G C W England
Miss L V Goodwin
Dr M O Greene
Professor T R C Greet
Professor R A Hammond
Professor M E Hertridge*
Mrs L V Hill
Mr D C Hutchison
Mrs A K Jeffery*
Mrs R J Jennings*
Mr T J King
Mr D J Leicester
Miss C H Middlemiss*
Dr J R Molyneux
Dr S Paterson
Mr M L Peaty
Professor S W J Reid
Dr K A Richards
Mr P B Robinson
Dr K S H Salmon
Dr C L Scudamore
Col N C Smith
Dr C P Sturgess
Dr C W Tufnell
Professor J L N Wood

*denotes absent

In attendance:
Mrs E K Cox Chair, Veterinary Nurses Council
Ms E C Ferguson Registrar
Ms L Lockett CEO
Ms C McCann Assistant Registrar / Director of Operations (DoO)

President’s introduction

1. The President welcomed members and invited guests to the meeting and outlined the order of the meeting.
Apologies for absence

2. Apologies for absence were received from:
   - Professor Argyle
   - Dr Braithwaite
   - Professor Herrtage
   - Mrs Jeffery
   - Mrs Jennings
   - Miss Middlemiss
   - Ms Butler, Chair ARC (invited guest)

3. It was noted that Miss Middlemiss, the new Chief Veterinary Officer for the UK, had been officially appointed to Council by the Privy Council Office and the President looked forward to welcoming her formally at a later date.

Declarations of interest

4. Declarations of interest were received from:
   - Dr Chambers: he was now a Trustee of VetLife;
   - Mr Hutchison: he was now a Commercial Consultant to Legal and General’s pet insurance business.

5. There were no other general declarations.

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 18 January 2018 (held in committee)

6. Council accepted these minutes as a true record of the meeting.

Matters arising

Obituaries

7. The College had received notification that two of its Honorary Associates had recently passed away:
   - J McC M Cunningham (Ian) Associateship awarded in 1986
   - Prof Dr Matthaeus Stoeber Associateship awarded in 1978

8. Council held a minute's silence for all members who had passed away since the last meeting.
Correspondence and matters for report

9. The President informed Council of the following matters:

RCVS Day 2018

10. Date: Friday, 13 July 2018
   Venue: Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), 66 Portland Place, London W1B 1AD
   Draft timings: 09:30 am: Coffee
                  10:00 am: Annual General Meeting (followed by Meeting of Council)
                  11:00 am: Presentation of Awards
                  12:00 noon: Talk from guest speaker (TBC)
                  12:45 pm: Drinks
                  13:00 pm: Lunch
                  15:00 pm: End

RCVS Council election challenges 2017

11. As reported at the last Council meeting (held in committee) and in the veterinary press, two challenges were received in relation to last year’s election, from Mr Davies and Mr Lonsdale. Both challenges were dealt with individually in accordance with procedures set out in the RCVS Election Scheme 2006, and went before a Panel (Challenge Committee) of three non-elected Council members assisted by a Legal Assessor appointed by the College.

12. Mr Davies’ challenge was rejected before Christmas. Mr Lonsdale’s challenge was of three parts: the election result; the make-up of the Panel; and also the Legal Assessor assisting in the process. The same Panel considered both individual challenges and all three parts of Mr Lonsdale’s challenge was also rejected.

13. Both candidates were standing in the forthcoming RCVS Council Elections 2018.

RCVS Council elections 2018

14. The information was on the RCVS website and a press release had also been issued to veterinary press with the names of candidates standing for election. There were 10 candidates this year, seven men and three women, which included four existing Council members eligible for re-election and six new candidates.

15. Ballot papers and candidates’ details were due to be posted during the week commencing 12 March and all votes must be cast, either online or by post, by 5pm on Friday, 27 April 2018.

16. Once again the College was inviting members to ‘Quiz the candidates’ by putting their questions directly to all those standing for election. Each candidate would then be invited to choose two questions to answer from all those received, and produce a video recording of their answers – all recordings would be published on the RCVS website on the week the election commenced.

Honours and Awards 2018

17. Following the January 2018 Council meeting, all awardees had accepted their honours. They were:
Queen’s Medal:
Professor P D Clegg MA VetMB PhD CertEO DipECVS FRCVS

Impact Award:
Miss J M Statt BVMS(Hons) GPCert(SAM) MRCVS

Inspiration Award:
Professor D C Knottenbelt OBE BVM&S DVM&S DipECEIM MRCVS
Dr E E Escalona BSc(Hons) BVSc PhD AHE MRCVS

International Award:
Dr A H Mariam DVM
Ms R T Wright

18. Unfortunately there were no nominations this year for Honorary Associateship. All awards would be presented at RCVS Day 2018.

President’s Reception November 2018 – date change
19. Following the success of the previous evening’s Reception, it was decided to move the next Reception, currently scheduled for November 2018, back to March 2019, on the evening before the Council meeting (date tbc).

Diary dates 2019
20. There had been some enquiries regarding diary dates for 2019. These had not yet been drafted as Council needed to agree the structure of Council and Committees first – that decision was due to be taken at the June Council Meeting. It was hoped that the 2019 diary dates would be sent out shortly thereafter.

CEO update
21. Before introducing her report, the CEO thanked Mrs Lockley in the Comms Team and Mr Webster / Ms Hawkins in the Facilities Team for their work on the Reception held in-house the evening before and for turning the Council Chamber around ready for the Council meeting in the morning, and also the students from the Royal Veterinary College (RVC) who had acted in a wait staff capacity during the evening.

22. Recognising International Women’s Day (8 March) she stated that whilst the College currently had 40% of women on Council that represented all areas of veterinary business, this was not enough and should be kept in mind when discussions about future structure was undertaken.

23. Turning to the report, it was noted that there was an increased amount of detail as information had been provided for every item in the Strategic Plan. She highlighted:

- success of Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) awards ceremony, which had taken place at the Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons (SPVS) / Veterinary Management Group (VMG) Congress (rebranded from Veterinary Practice Management Group (VPMG)). She said that this had overall been an excellent event, that highlighted that whenever the RCVS went to
congresses these days it was very much more involved in all sorts of seminars, meetings and activities, and engaging with the profession as a regulator that was taking proactive strides to make the professions the best they could be;

- reassurance for Council that recruitment was ongoing for the Mind Matters Manager, interviews would be held over the next month or so;

- the new Massive Online Open Course (MOOC) to help develop everyday leadership skills, developed in collaboration with the National Health Service (NHS), would be launched in concept at the British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) Congress in April and show ‘one health’ in action;

- over the following few months Senior Team would be looking at all of the processes within the organisation to see where they could be streamlined and improved;

- new Council / committee structure would be discussed in the afternoon session.

24. There were no questions, the report was noted and the new more detailed approach commended.

Matters for decision

Statutory examination fees – draft regulations
25. The Chair of Education Committee, Professor Dawson, updated Council on the review of the Statutory Membership Examination and asked Council to approve the changes to the examination regulations and fee level. The changes had been approved by both the Primary Qualifications sub-committee (PQSC) and Education Committee (EC). It was explained that whilst there seemed to be a sharp increase in the fee level from £1,420 to £2,500, this fee had not been reviewed since 2008 and had there been a yearly review the figure would in fact be higher than the proposed £2,500.

26. Council agreed the recommendations and it was understood that the Education Department would implement procedures to ensure that the fee was reviewed on a more regular basis in future.

Reports of committees

Audit and Risk Committee
27. The Chair of Audit and Risk Committee (ARC), Ms Butler, had sent her apologies to Council and Dr Connell, a member of the committee, introduced the reports in her absence.

Meeting held on 4 October 2017
28. The report was before Council, and the following items were highlighted:
- the Committee agreed that they should see the Corporate Risk Register at each meeting and that all departments should produce a risk register, which would be reviewed in turn;

- the Committee agreed that they would receive assurances regarding the application to European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), provide oversight and scrutinise but there was no direct audit function;

- Crowe Clark Whitehill were appointed as auditors from amongst six firms that had made presentations;

- with regards to Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), it was noted that a two-year review had been put into place.

Meeting held on 25 January 2018

29. The report before Council was still marked confidential as it was yet to be agreed by Committee at its next meeting. However, the main items from this meeting were outlined:

- the Director of Communications (DoC) presented the departmental risk register and there was a discussion around the main risks on the register. Planning around unforeseen events was being reviewed and the Crisis Plan would be updated to allow the College to make a quick response where necessary;

- the Corporate Risk Register would be ranked according to severity of risk;

- the Director of Education (DoE) had discussed the ENQA application and committee agreed to oversee the College’s assurances for the project;

- in future, work plans for the following calendar year would be approved alongside review reports at year end to synchronise with the timings of committee meetings;

- consideration was given to the accreditation, visitation, and personnel required and reasoning for visits to educational institutions;

- trends would now form part of the annual monitoring of reports, the Director of Veterinary Nursing (DoVN) would advise a future meeting on the VN qualification process;

- there had been a short update on the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) – ‘champions’ from each department had been appointed and the Senior Team was currently reviewing policies. There would be a Frequently-Asked Questions (FAQs) list for the professions added to the RCVS website and training for members of the Preliminary Investigation, and Disciplinary, Committees;

- audit partner, Nicola May, of Crowe Clark Whitehill joined the meeting and took the Committee through each section of the audit – new auditing standards were introduced for 2018 with formulation of best practice;
- the Committee was informed that Council was waiting for the outcome of the Legislative Reform Order but that Committee would remain unchanged for the foreseeable future.

30. A question was raised regarding GDPR and assurances, in particular, fines for non-compliance were significant and what assurance could the Committee give when the Regulation came into force in May 2018? It was noted that the Committee was a filtering process, and that risks and mitigations were to be considered closely.

31. Council noted the report.

Education Committee
32. The Chair gave an overview of the minutes of the Education Committee meeting held on 7 February 2018, including work on: visitations; the ENQA visit; and, an update on progress of the Graduate Outcomes project. The Committee had been disappointed to note the continued lack of engagement with the continuing professional development (CPD) audit from some members of the profession and had asked for further detail on the profile of those who aren’t complying to see if there was a common denominator.

33. It was questioned whether membership of sub-committees, working groups and visitation teams was published anywhere on the RCVS website. It was confirmed that the full visitation reports, including a list of visitors, were available on the RCVS website when they had been published; there was also a list of membership of standing and statutory committees. The membership of sub-committees and working groups could be found in the minutes and papers for committees which were also published on the website.

34. Council noted the report.

Standards Committee
35. The Chair of Standards Committee, Dr Richards, thanked the RCVS team for their support before drawing Council’s attention to:

Informed consent
36. There was a lot of information currently available but that it needed to be signposted better.

Feline blood banks
37. The Junior-Vice President (JVP), Ms Boag, declared an interest in this item.

38. The President stated that this item was not detailed in the unclassified minutes and if Council wished to explore the topic in depth, he would ask visitors to leave the room. This was not required.

39. The Chair outlined that the Recognised Veterinary Practice (RVP) Sub-Committee had looked at this matter already, in the context of a specific enquiry, and formed an opinion that it was not RVP. Standards Committee, inviting the members of the RVP, considered the collection of feline blood in the wider context of collection and blood banking. It was agreed that sedating the donor cat, if necessary, to take blood was acceptable if there was an immediate or anticipated clinical
need. The JVP stated that she was conflicted in a number of areas but was delighted with, and welcomed, the decision made.

40. It was noted that the practice of blood donation by conscious cats was relatively new and would be kept under review by Standards Committee as the area developed.

41. It was questioned if the RVP Sub-Committee would have to change their view if sedation of cats for blood donation for non-emergency situations happened in the future? It was noted that if there was an immediate need (emergency situation) there did not need to be a change to RVP – but that it would be in contravention of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act (ASPA) 1986, and Home Office procedures, if it was done routinely.

42. Council noted the report.

Veterinary Nurses Council
43. The Chair of VN Council, Mrs Cox, presented the minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2018, and drew attention to a few items discussed at the meeting.

44. VN Council had considered the point raised at the November 2017 RCVS Council meeting regarding the wording in the terms of reference relating to members of VN Council, which stated that they should be “practising or living wholly or mainly in the United Kingdom”. It was confirmed that this was a historical wording, which had been carried forward through several iterations of the terms of reference since the introduction of VN Council. It was agreed that the statement “practising or living wholly or mainly in the United Kingdom” should be removed, to bring the rules in line with those for RCVS Council, and that the crucial point was that all applicants for election to VN Council should be registered veterinary nurses. The amendment to the rules would be put to RCVS Council for approval during 2018.

45. The Chair gave a brief overview of some of the work of the VN Futures groups, and highlighted an increase in the number of Training Practices. VN Council had also received a paper setting out numbers of student enrolments, new registrations and registered veterinary nurses over the past five years, which showed a steady increase in all areas year on year.

46. VN Council had been pleased to note, in the report of the Registered Veterinary Nurse Preliminary Investigation Committee, the successful conclusion of a criminal case involving a bogus Registered Veterinary Nurse, which had been initially picked up due to the suspicions of the veterinary practice which had reported this to the RCVS and had resulted in a conviction of fraud.

47. There were no comments or questions and the report was noted.

PIC / DC Liaison Committee
48. It was noted that there had not been a meeting of Liaison Committee since Council’s last public meeting held on 2 November 2017, when the minutes from the October 2017 Committee meeting were noted. The next meeting was scheduled for Thursday, 12 April 2018.
Reports of Statutory Committees

49. The President stated that the Preliminary Investigation Committee, Registered Veterinary Nurses Preliminary Investigation Committee, Disciplinary Committee and Registered Veterinary Nurses Disciplinary Committee reports were before Council and that the Registrar could respond to questions in the absence of the Chairs of those Committees.

50. It was questioned what was meant in the cases where there was a length of time before the individuals received a decision due to ‘lack of time’. It was confirmed this was where matters had overrun due to various reasons, for example, there were more witnesses than expected, or it took a longer time to make a decision. It was noted that if a case overran, because of the number of bookings already in the various diaries (RCVS, Counsel, Respondent, etc.), it could face further delay before the process could be reconvened.

51. It was noted that inadequate care / negligence was the highest figure in the separate categories and questioned if previous years could be considered to see if the figure was increasing, or whether there were any trends that could be illustrated? The Registrar reported that there were data limitations on the existing ProfCon IT system; inadequate care was a generic label where people had complained that things had ‘gone wrong’; also limitations on the current system meant that Enquiries within the triage processes had to have a ‘label’ and this was often on limited information. The new system going live later in 2018 would allow better interrogation of specific areas.

52. Council noted the reports.

Notices of motion

53. There were no notices of motion received.

Questions

54. There were no questions received.

Recommendation for the appointment of Officers – President and Vice-President (Senior) respectively, for confirmation at the AGM on 13 July 2018

55. The (current) Vice-President (Senior), Dr Tufnell, took over as Chair of the meeting for this item as the President and Vice-President (Junior) left the room to ensure procedures and oversight were followed. It had been discussed at Operational Board that this was not a ‘rubber stamp’ exercise and that Council should have the opportunity to say something if they wished.
56. Council agreed that the incoming President be Ms Amanda Boag, and Professor Stephen May move to be Senior Vice-President from the AGM on 13 July 2018.

**Election of Vice-President (Junior) – recommendation for confirmation at the AGM on 13 July 2018**

57. The President reported that there had been two nominations received:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Mr D F Catlow</th>
<th>Dr N T Connell</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supporters:</td>
<td>Professor S Dawson</td>
<td>Mr R Davis</td>
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<td>Professor M E Herrtage</td>
<td>Dr M O Greene</td>
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<td>Mrs L V Hill</td>
<td>Dr J R Molyneux</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dr K A Richards</td>
<td>Col N C Smith</td>
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| Date of first joining Council: | July 2010 (Elected) | July 2013 (Elected) |
| Current term due to end: | July 2018 | July 2019 |

58. Each candidate voted and left the room in order for Council to have a confidential discussion if it so wished. As not every member present had had the opportunity to read the letters that the candidates had provided, the President read each of them out in turn.

59. The election process was discussed. Council agreed to continue with the current process and to review the entire election process going forward.

60. A vote was taken by ballot paper (including one postal vote received). The Registrar and Director of Operations (DoO) briefly left the room to count the ballot papers.

61. Both candidates returned to the room, and Dr Connell was congratulated as the successful candidate.

**Other Elections**

**Election of Treasurer**

62. The President reported that there had been one nomination received:
63. The candidate voted and left the room in order for Council to have a confidential discussion if it so wished.

64. As there was only one candidate for this, and each of the Chair elections, the President asked Council if it would prefer to vote by show of hands or by using the ballot papers provided. It was agreed to use the ballot papers.

65. A vote was taken, the Registrar and DoO briefly left the room to count the ballot papers.

66. The candidate returned to the room and was congratulated for his re-election as Treasurer for his second year.

**Election of Chair, Education Committee / Election of Chair, Standards Committee**

67. The President spoke to the individual candidates for each of these elections. Owing to time constraints they agreed that the vote for each position would be taken together.

**Chair, Education Committee**

68. The President reported that there had been one nomination received:

- **Candidate:** Professor S Dawson
- **Supporters:**
  - Professor D J Argyle
  - Professor E Cameron
  - Professor G C W England
  - Dr S Paterson
- **Date of first joining Council:** July 2011 (Appointed)
- **Current term due to end:** July 2020

**Chair, Standards Committee**

69. The President reported that there had been one nomination received:

- **Candidate:** Dr C P Sturgess
- **Supporters:**
  - Ms A K Boag
  - Professor S Dawson
  - Dr K A Richards
  - Dr C W Tufnell
- **Date of first joining Council:** July 2013 (Elected)
- **Current term due to end:** July 2020
Council Jun 18 Al 04

Candidate: Dr K A Richards

Supporters: Ms L V Goodwin
Mr D C Hutchison
Professor S W J Reid
Dr C P Sturgess

Date of first joining Council: July 2015 (Elected)
Current term due to end: July 2019

70. The candidates voted and left the room in order for Council to have a confidential discussion if it so wished.
71. A vote was taken, the Registrar and DoO briefly left the room to count the ballot papers.
72. The candidates returned to the room. Professor Dawson was congratulated on her re-election as Chair, Education Committee for her third year. Dr Richards was congratulated on her re-election as Chair, Standards Committee for her second year.
73. Newer members of Council were reassured that the voting process had evolved over time to what was before them. Also, the question of e-voting was raised, however, all of the processes would be reviewed.

Any other College business (taken out of order)

Fellowship by Thesis (tabled paper)
74. On behalf of the Fellowship Sub-Committee, the Chair, Professor Dawson requested Council ratification for the award of Fellowship by Thesis be granted to:

- Dr Richard Laven MRCVS by thesis entitled: 'Studies on Hoof Horn Growth and Wear and the Development of Hoof Horn Haemorrhages in Heifers';
- Mr Lewis Smith MRCVS by thesis entitled: 'The Use of Intrasynovial Corticosteroids in Equine Thoroughbred Flat Racehorses: Analysis of Safety, Efficacy and Racing Performance'.

75. Council ratified the awards.

Date of next meeting

76. The date of the next meeting was Thursday, 14 June 2018 at 10:00 am (reconvening in the afternoon: 2:00 – 4:00 pm).
Risk Register, equality and diversity

77. The following risk was identified:

- the reputational risk surrounding the increase in the Statutory Examination fee: it was a big jump and fees related to a small group of people so careful communication was necessary.

Presentations

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) – Registrar

78. The Registrar outlined the presentation and the need to raise awareness for Council members as RCVS Councillors. There would also be a webinar for staff and committee members shortly, that Council were welcome to join.

79. The main points were:

- what was new? From the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO), potential fines for noncompliance were the ‘headline grabbers’ that did a very good job of getting people’s attention:
  - potential 2% of total global turnover / €10m (whichever higher); up to 4% / €20m for the most serious infringements;
  - must report a breach within 72 hours of becoming aware;
  - upping the language around information security;
  - a lot was a continuation of what was already there (electronic marketing regulations have been in place since 2004);

- comes into force 25 May 2018;

- key principles:
  - processing lawfully everything you hold about a living person (so does not cover animals);
  - other forms of held information (tax, pension);
  - data: ordinary rules / enhanced rules (special categories – used to be called ‘sensitive information’ – health / religion / sexual orientation);
  - only hold the necessary information that you need – no longer than you need to;
  - systems in place to secure it;
- transparency – privacy notices have been around for a long time, should be concise and easy to understand;

- with smaller organisations there was the emphasis on accountability – do it and able to prove it;

• in real life: more policies and procedures – a tightening up exercise;

• some level of guidance for the profession:

  - a group of vets has helped the College in producing FAQs for the profession;

  - advice would go onto the RCVS website shortly: people had to write their own policies – there was no shortage of information available but the College had tried to make it more targeted to the veterinary world. Other veterinary organisations had also published guidance;

• ARC oversight of RCVS policies.

Information Management – Chief Technology Officer (CTO)

80. The CTO encouraged Council members to think about how the GDPR affected them, to use it to make sure they had looked at the basics: information management was anything done with the information they had; it was a journey around understanding and a shifting culture to instead of ‘owning’ information becoming a ‘custodian’ of the information – the information itself belonged to the person it was about. This would also include information shared in a conversation and care should be taken of not only what was talked about, but also where it was being talked about.

Future approach

81. Work was ongoing to try to find a leading Council / Committee / Board ‘co-ordination tool’ to enable all involved to stay fully and immediately informed on: meeting dates, agendas, current and past papers / proceedings, ongoing discussions and updates. It would primarily be an online system with the ability to also use it on tablets or phones, on and off line. Security and ease of use would be the key criteria considered during procurement. As the strategy went forward, Council would be updated and kept informed.

In the meantime

82. While work was ongoing, there were some simple practical steps that could be taken to ensure information security:

• File management:

  - destroy all copies of emails / documents / papers once you have no further need of them;

  - be very careful with phones, tablets and USB storage (encrypt and passcode);

  - be aware of who has access to any ‘cloud’ storage you may be using;

• Passwords and accounts:
- lock your phone / computer when not in use, set this to occur automatically (timeout);
- use separate passwords for each device / account;
- change the password on devices / accounts regularly (quarterly);
- do not share access to any RCVS related accounts (devices or email);
- use strong passwords: minimum 10 characters, three different types of character (letter, number, symbol);

- Safe computing:
  - be aware of who is around you if looking at information in public;
  - regularly update your operating system and anti-malware (at least weekly);
  - be aware of 'phishing' emails – if you are unsure of the sender do not click on links or open attachments.

83. Comments and questions included:

- how secure were password apps?
  - Password Locker was very good, though many others were not worth the money – the CTO would circulate suggestions to Council;

- what about updating malware for Apple Mac vs. Microsoft systems?
  - Apple Mac OSX 10 and above and Microsoft Windows 7 and above were protected, and automatic tools were generally very good. Updating an operating system and anti-malware was normally automatic but had the possibility of falling out of licence and leaving the system exposed, so it was best to check. The CTO would circulate recommendations to Council.

84. The President thanked the Registrar and CTO for their presentations and drew the meeting to a close.

[D PAGES 16 – 24 CONFIDENTIAL TO COUNCIL MEMBERS ONLY]

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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Council</th>
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<td>Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>CEO Update</td>
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<td>Decisions required</td>
<td>None</td>
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</table>
| Author    | Lizzie Lockett  
             | CEO       
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Summary
The Strategic Plan 2017-19 outlines 39 actions arranged under five ambitions:

a) Learning culture
b) Leadership and innovation
c) Continuing to be a First-rate Regulator
d) Global reach
e) Our service agenda

This paper outlines progress under each heading; we also update the profession on progress on a regular basis by email.

The Strategic Plan provides us with direction and focus while not restricting our involvement in other areas. There are a number of issues that sit outside the plan but remain key projects to be delivered by the teams at Belgravia House, many of which form part of Committees’ strategic plans, such as:

- Review of veterinary legislation
- The implementation of a new IT system for the Professional Conduct process
- A review of the Statutory Membership Examination
- A major piece of work around Graduate Outcomes
- Preparation for the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation
- Ensuring we have adequate staff resources to carry out the challenging programme of work that lies ahead

The pages to follow cover a range of areas, meanwhile, here are some highlights since the last update to Council in March:

- The **Legislative Reform Order** to reform the governance of the College received Ministerial assent on 1 May 2018 – this will be discussed further as a separate agenda item at the June meeting and represents a significant milestone for the RCVS, and a huge amount of work from Council members, Defra and staff at the College.

- We had well-received and varied participation at the **British Small Animal Veterinary Association Congress** in April, including sessions on leadership (including the launch of our Massive Open Online Course jointly with the NHS), innovation, Mind Matters, Practice Standards and Brexit, together with streams on VN Futures and from our partner charity, RCVS Knowledge.

- We engaged with the profession at a **Regional Question Time** meeting in Bristol.

- We ran a seminar on **flexible working** within the VN profession, as part of VN Futures.

- We attended the new event **Vets: Stay, Go, Diversify Live** with a variety of speakers on different panels, including leadership, mental health, careers and the role of the College.

- We successfully held the **2018 Council election** – albeit that this was an unusual one, because the LRO was proceeding at the same time and we were not sure whether we would be welcoming three or six new Council members. This complication was signalled to voters throughout the election period.
• Staff and some members of the Officer team have spent considerable time and resources on communication, briefings and meetings following Council’s November 2017 statement on complementary and alternative medicines.

• We published the results of our consultation on Telemedicine.

• We published a digital communications toolkit for RCVS accredited practices.

• A visitation team from ENQA came to the College during April to assess whether we meet their standards for membership. Many thanks to all of those Council members who attended the various Q&A sessions in support of our bid for membership. We will find out in early autumn if we have been successful.

• This year we sent out 29,464 annual retention fee notices to veterinary surgeons, 4% higher than in 2017. Since the introduction of email fee notices in 2015, and improvements to the My Account area, the renewal process has become more streamlined. The number of outstanding payments as at 30 May was 1.8%, compared with 2% in 2017, a marginal improvement.

If Council members would like more information on any aspect of our work, please just ask.

Meeting the objectives of our Strategic Plan

Objectives to be tackled year by year are agreed in the November of the preceding year. The following are those agreed in 2016 and 2017. Numbering is as per the 2017-9 Strategic Plan (missing numbers are those objectives to be tackled in 2019).

A – Learning culture

A1. Establish the extent to which a blame culture is present within the veterinary and veterinary nursing professions, and set a baseline against which any change can be measured, as we move towards a culture where learning and reflection is encouraged.

An independent research organisation was commissioned to carry out initial research to establish the extent to which any such blame culture might exist in the professions and whether the RCVS contributes to its existence.

An online survey was completed during last spring 2017 by 7,349 people and the responses will be augmented by qualitative research. This work remains in a pipeline behind work ongoing around the impact of the Professional Conduct process on mental health – see below.

A Mind Matters Manager, Lisa Quigley, joined the team on 8 May. Blame Culture falls under of her remit and moving this work along more quickly will become a priority once she has become established in role.

Meanwhile, a session on blame/learning culture took place at BSAVA Congress in April 2018.
A2. Develop a series of evidence-based actions that the veterinary team can take to reduce blame culture and ensure a culture of continual learning is established
Attendant on results of blame/learning culture survey being finalised. Meanwhile, a pilot of the Schwartz Round reflective practice model will be rolled out in autumn, involving a range of different practice types, to see if this approach to developing non-judgemental sharing of the emotional impact of cases can contribute to a learning culture. This was an approach identified as part of the Vet Futures Action Plan.

A3. Help to change public expectations around their interactions with veterinary professionals, including around risk, uncertainty and value (VF ambition five, recommendation 27, action M)
The RCVS and British Veterinary Association (BVA) communications teams launched a social media campaign during National Pet Month in April/May 2018 to encourage animal owners to ensure their pets are registered with a veterinary practice. Under the hashtag #petsneedvets, we used Facebook and Twitter to share 11 reasons outlining the value of registering with a veterinary practice, and created a range of digital resources (including social media cards and a video) for practices to use on their own social media channels. We are continuing to push this campaign at our summer events this year, starting at the Devon County Show in May where we handed out around 1,000 branded bags and leaflets.

A5. Review the impact of our concerns-handling and disciplinary framework on the mental health and wellbeing of the veterinary professions, and take appropriate actions
An independent research organisation has been commissioned to carry out this review. A series of interviews has already taken place with stakeholders such as Vetlife and the Veterinary Defence Society, and some of those who have been through our disciplinary process. Meanwhile, qualitative data have been gathered as part of the blame culture survey outlined above.

A draft report has been produced by the researchers and will be published as part of the Mind Matters Initiative, allowing the RCVS Professional Conduct Department to respond to the recommendations, alongside other relevant organisations who play a part in supporting those going through our complaints process. It has been reviewed in draft by the Mind Matters Taskforce and the Preliminary Investigation Committee/Disciplinary Committee Liaison Committee. It is likely to be published over summer.

Meanwhile a plan for the development of a buddy system, to help ensure those involved in RCVS complaints have someone who understands the process to whom they can talk, is under consideration. It is likely that this will be run at arm’s length from the College.

A6. If appropriate following the completion of trials, introduce an Alternative Dispute Resolution service.
Complete.

A7. Consult upon, and implement as appropriate, an outcomes-based approach to continuing professional development
New volunteers are being recruited to the pilot – both individuals and via the Major Employers Group. So far 68 new volunteers have signed up, but this doesn't include the major employers. The IT team has developed an RCVS app to use for the pilot that can be further developed based on feedback and
then rolled out to anyone who wishes to use it. The IT team is also investigating the opportunity to create a new CPD platform for members, bringing together the functionality of the College’s five existing CPD systems and consolidating them into a single, career-long experience, consistent across students, vets and nurses.

**A10. Improve communication with veterinary and veterinary nursing students, in order to clarify our role and function**

We are continuing to invite veterinary students to our flagship events in 2018, with Vet Futures Students Ambassadors and Association of Veterinary Students (AVS) and British Association of Veterinary Nursing Student (BAVNS) representatives due attend RCVS Day, and plans underway for a student competition at Fellowship Day.

A student engagement working group is also being set up to discuss and identify other areas for improving communication and engagement with vet/VN students.

Student representatives will also be included in Education Committee and the Primary Qualifications Subcommittee, going forward, and the next Joint Officers meeting with the Veterinary Schools Council will include representatives from the AVS Officer team.

Work is also underway to identify extra-mural studies opportunities for students within Belgravia House, in recognition of the importance of encouraging students to think broadly about their future veterinary careers.

Plans are underway to create a ‘My Account’ area for VN students (and, if possible, vet students) allowing them to manage the details that we hold for them, and provide the opportunity to increase our engagement with them from an earlier stage. We are also reviewing the opportunity to extend “My Account” functionality to our Higher Education partners, enabling them to have an RCVS home / portal online which would provide a bi-lateral communication channel we can use to interact with each other concerning all aspects of our relationships with them and their students.

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**B – Leadership and innovation**

**B2. Through completion of our governance review, ensure that we are an effective and efficient organisation, better able to lead the profession and serve the needs of the public, including the carrying out of training and the provision of coaching for RCVS Council members who take, or are considering taking, leadership roles**

The LRO completed its passage through Parliament with a debate in the House of Lords on 1 May. The Order was subsequently signed by the Defra Minister, Lord Gardiner, on 2 May and will come into force on 1 July 2018. The immediate impact of the Order is that only three of the candidates seeking election will now join RCVS Council. The paperwork for the election flagged up that this may be the case.
An independent selection committee has been responsible for recruiting and interviewing candidates for the six new lay positions on Council and Council will be asked to approve their recommendations for appointment.

The issue of induction, training and coaching of Council members will come to a future meeting of Council.

**B3. Define the role of the new Fellowship to advise and support the RCVS and act as ambassadors for the profession within society at large**

An update on the development of the strategy for the new Fellowship was discussed by Operational Board in May, will be refined at the Fellowship Board meeting in June, and come to Council for consideration in September.

Going forward it is proposed that the Fellowship be housed under the RCVS leadership team, to ensure appropriate resources and focus for its role as a learned society.

**B4. Identify and support the next generation of veterinary leaders and develop leadership opportunities across the veterinary and veterinary nursing professions, within all branches of the professions, at all levels - locally, nationally and internationally (VF ambition six, recommendations 12, 17, 31, 32 and 34, action Q)**

A three-year plan to address this objective was submitted to the Operational Board at its March meeting, it included three key streams of activity: leadership for everyone; leading the profession; and, veterinary leadership development opportunities.

As part of the ‘leadership for everyone’ stream, we have been working closely with the NHS Leadership Academy to develop a massive open online course (MOOC) to provide a gateway programme for veterinary professionals wishing to improve their leadership skills.

The concept was launched at BSAVA Congress in April and since then over 500 vets, vet nurses, students and practice managers have signed up for a pilot of the course, which will begin in late June.

**B5. Develop a biennial Innovation Symposium, to showcase new technologies, educational and business models etc. from within veterinary and related fields, and encourage a culture of innovation (VF ambition five, recommendation 24, action R)**

The initial event took place in September 2017. Although the original strategic plan requirement was for a biennial event, in order to maintain momentum in this important area of work, plans are being made for a follow up event in late 2018 focusing on innovation in translational medicine and One Health.

Meanwhile, a broader three-year innovation strategy has been developed and approved by the Operational Board, following feedback from Council at its January meeting.

**B6. Encourage diversity in our Council, our staff and other groups allied to the RCVS**

This activity is being considered as part of the review of governance and Council / committee structure and operation, and ensuring that any proposed changes do not limit diversity is a key objective.
Training for Council members and staff around unconscious bias is under consideration.

The veterinary careers materials we are developing will have a particular focus on encouraging broader diversity within the next generation of veterinary students.

A meeting is being sought with a representative from the British Veterinary Ethnicity and Diversity Society to see how the College can further support diversity within the profession.

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**C- Continuing to be a First Rate Regulator**

**C1. Review Schedule 3 to the Veterinary Surgeons Act, and the relevant parts of the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct, to clarify and bolster the role of the veterinary nurse (VNF ambition six, actions 29-31)**

This work is now being fed into the broader review of Veterinary Legislation which, although it does not feature as a specific line item in the Strategic Plan, is bringing together several strands of work, many of which have been thrown into sharp relief by Brexit.

We published the outcomes of the 2017 consultation towards the end of last year. One of the key findings that can be tackled quickly was the perceived lack of clarity around delegation, which led to a lack of confidence in both delegating veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses being delegated to. This is being addressed by the development of some guidance materials which will be published this summer. The Veterinary Legislation Working Party next meets on 5 June.

**C2. Develop a strategy for regulating allied professionals, either via Associate status or updated Exemption Orders (VF ambition six, recommendations four and six, action U)**

Following the review of Exemption Orders by the Exemption Orders and Associates Working Party as requested by Defra, the Working Party’s recommendations were presented at June 2017 Council and approved in their entirety and considered by the Preliminary Investigation/ Disciplinary Liaison Committee in July.

A report on Exemption Orders is now nearing completion with a series of meetings underway, for example, with equine dental technicians, physiotherapists, hoof-trimmers etc. This work is now being brought under the auspices of the Legislation Working Party, along with work to review Schedule 3 to the Veterinary Surgeons Act.

Work with regards to future associates remains ongoing.

**C3. Review our concerns-handling and disciplinary processes, including the impact of the Legislative Reform Order that separated the membership of the Preliminary Investigation and Disciplinary Committees from Council, the standard of proof that we set and our sanctions**

The Secretary of State is required to produce a report reviewing the objectives and impact of the LRO by the end of July 2018. To assist in this process the RCVS is working within a framework supplied by Defra, submitted a report to Defra at the end of April and is available to assist Defra in completion of the report as required.
It is anticipated that a plan for a broader review of concerns handling will be submitted for Council’s consideration later this year. It is also anticipated that later in the year Council will be asked to consider proposals to consult in relation to the Standard of Proof for Disciplinary Cases.

C4. Review the regulatory framework surrounding new technologies, to ensure it is proportionate and encourages innovation, while maintaining high standards of animal health and welfare (VF ambitions five, recommendations four and 23, action S)

In February 2016, Standards Committee launched consultations aimed at both the veterinary professions and the public on the use of telemedicine in veterinary clinical practice. The consultations were designed to help us identify potential risks associated with telemedicine, identify areas where it may be useful to address the needs of both clinicians and the public, and to support the potential development of new professional standards and guidance.

These consultations received 1,230 responses from members of the profession, 229 responses from animal owners and 15 responses from veterinary organisations and stakeholders and a summary of the results of the consultation was published on 9 April 2018.

On 31 August 2017 a special meeting of Standards Committee was convened to consider the detailed consultation analysis. Following this, discussion took place at the November 2017 meeting of Council, and the subject was revisited by Standards Committee in April 2018. At that time the Committee agreed that to allow matters to be considered and a decision made as to whether proposals would be put to Council to amend the definition of ‘under care’, further work should be done to develop a framework to mitigate risk of changes to the ‘under care’ provision.

A paper will be brought back to Standards for further consideration, which will include looking at other professions and regulators. At the same time, the Committee recommended that the current Supporting Guidance should be amended to make clearer what is permissible now in terms of offering advice remotely, and this work is ongoing.

C6. Review outcomes for graduates, with consideration of the likely requirements from the profession and the public of the vets of tomorrow (including the structure and provision of extra-mural studies) (VF actions I and J)

The most recent meeting of the Working Group, chaired by the President, took place on 30 April 2018, the outcomes of which were further discussed by Education Committee and representatives of the Veterinary Schools Council in May.

The Working Group is considering the issues under three headings: progress into practice, including extra-mural studies (EMS) and the Professional Development Phase (PDP); non-technical skills; and selection and recruitment/retention. The next phase of the project will be to consult with the whole profession on a series of options/proposals later this year and Council will be considering the emerging proposals on the afternoon of June 14, in order to inform the content of the consultation.
D – Global reach

D1. Develop a strategy to make sure that the profession is in charge of its future by maximising the opportunities and minimising the risks of Brexit:

Work continues with the joint Defra/RCVS/BVA Veterinary Capacity and Capability Project (VCCP), which aims to ensure that workforce needs continue to be met, regardless of which Brexit scenario eventually becomes reality. A current activity is to develop a joint VCCP submission to the Home Office on workforce issues.

Recently we have presented on Brexit issues at the BSAVA Congress; and are developing plans for the promotion of government veterinary careers as part of wider planned work on veterinary careers, to which government funding will contribute.

We are also starting the process of re-surveying non-UK EU veterinary graduates working in the UK to find out about changes to their plans and how they have been treated since the Brexit vote, following the initial survey last summer.

At its last meeting (14 May 2018), the Brexit Taskforce reviewed our Brexit principles and policies and a revised paper will come to Council for discussion at its June meeting.

D2. Collaborate with other competent authorities with other competent authorities, associations, educational bodies and the commercial sector to establish a framework for the management of the impact of new technologies, such that animal health and welfare remains centre stage, regardless of from where veterinary services are being delivered into the UK and beyond (VF ambition five, recommendations four and 23, action S) [see also B5 and C4]

This work is on hold until we have a clear steer regarding telehealth in the UK.

D3. Improve our support for, and communication with, overseas graduates working in the UK and those considering working in the UK (VF ambition three, recommendation 13, action K)

Two overseas CPD training days are on the calendar, in June and November. Meanwhile thought is being given to the development of a video that can be used as part of the overseas registrations.

As mentioned above, we are in the process of re-surveying non-UK EU graduates working in the UK about their changing views post-Brexit.

Additionally, we are in the process of integrating International members / prospective members fully into our new online registration and renewal processes, which will greatly improve the speed with which their applications can be processed and further enhance the quality of their interactions with us.

D10. Support the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe’s Vet Futures Europe initiative (VF ambition six, recommendation 33, action W)

The Vet Futures Europe Report has been published. We offered to support some particular streams of work but these are not those that appear on the FVE priority list for 2018 so there is no immediate need for resources.
The RCVS and BVA will host the FVE General Assembly in the UK in summer 2020, an important signal to our European colleagues that the UK veterinary professions intend to remain fully engaged in Europe and beyond.

E – Our service agenda

E1. Recognising that staff who are highly engaged will deliver the best service for our stakeholders, we will continue to review the way we work, with particular emphasis on cross-departmental working, involving Council members where appropriate

A new approach to appraisals was launched in January, with a greater focus on personal and career development. We are reaching mid-year appraisals so it will be a good opportunity to review the success of this approach.

Work continues around mapping all of our roles using a job evaluation system, to give us an opportunity to understand the common skills required by seemingly different roles. This will feed into career development and succession planning, helping us to retain and progress talented individuals.

Our pilot mentoring scheme, which has seen 13 individuals paired with Senior Team mentors with the objective of focusing on their development goals, is currently under review. Many of the 'mentoring needs' were career-oriented, rather than longer term, so a drop-in day of career development sessions with the HR team is under consideration.

We attended the Great Place to Work (GPTW) dinner on 25 April and came 42nd in the rankings. This was lower than in previous years and may reflect a period of uncertainty when the survey was carried out (August 2017) as the current CEO had resigned and his successor had not been identified. In addition, it is worth remembering that our scores remained very solid, but any league table also depends on the performance of others. Nonetheless improving our GPTW scores continues to be a priority and will be addressed at our forthcoming Staff Away Day at the end of June.

E2. Continue to review our Estates Strategy so that we have appropriate spaces in which to work effectively and creatively, and a building that reflects the status of a Royal College

Our initial planning application to Westminster City Council (WCC) has been withdrawn. Revised plans have been drawn up and we have obtained external heritage advice on the proposals. We are going to submit them to Heritage England for their views before submitting them to Westminster Council.

The position remains that a paper will be brought to Council revisiting the options, including looking at changes in the property market, and if it is agreed that we go ahead with the build, a full tendering exercise for the building works will be carried out. The results will then go back to Council in order to appoint contractors for the works.

E3. Embrace the opportunities of technology to fully engage with ‘generation mobile’ and make interactions with the College as accessible and easy as possible, including the development of innovative ways for us to share our knowledge and communicate our services with all of our key audiences
The Digital Strategy was discussed by Operational Board in March and May and a summary will come to Council in June. Meanwhile, initiatives underway include the development of a new online system to assist with the organisation, auditing and follow-up processes for VN training providers, an improved remote access system for staff, automation of Direct Debit setup and processing for members payment of fees, and an online data query tool to enable website visitors to get live answers to commonly-asked questions about the shape and size of the profession.

E4. Develop and improve the advice we offer to animal owners and others to ensure they get the best out of their interaction with veterinary professionals

Improved content for the animal owners’ area of the refreshed website is currently in draft form and will be published shortly. We are attending a broader range of animal owner events and country shows this year (Devon County Show, Royal Welsh Show and BBC Countryfile Live), to improve our engagement with the animal-owning public, with a particular focus on vet/VN careers, Find a Vet, the Practice Standards Scheme and the #petsneedvets campaign.

E5. Review our Service Charter and associated Service Standards, making changes to our core services to ensure these promises are met, including reviewing resources and funding, where appropriate

Internal audit is being carried out in some areas – to be rolled out further – and feedback is being gathered from our ‘customers’.

E6. Develop a mechanism via which members of the veterinary and veterinary nursing professions can proactively engage with the College so that their issues and concerns are fed into discussions at an early enough stage to influence our agenda, where appropriate

To be commenced.

E7. Carry out a stakeholder mapping exercise to measure perceptions of the College and see what progress has been made since the research carried out as part of the First-rate Regulator exercise (2013); make appropriate recommendations for change

A costed plan was to be developed for Operational Board approval in May but, regrettably, this has slipped due to pressure of other work. It will return to a future meeting and to Council in the autumn. This work will be closely integrated with E5 (Service review) and C3 (review of professional conduct mechanism).
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<td>Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Proposed post-LRO structure/schedule</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>Following the various discussions at the November 2017 and March 2018 Council meetings, this paper aims to summarise a proposed way forward for the future governance structure of the College post-LRO</td>
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<td>Decisions required</td>
<td>Does this structure meet Council’s needs?</td>
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| Attachments  | Annex A – proposed meeting schedule for 2018-9 and 2019-20  
|              | Annex B – current terms of reference for Operational Board and proposed new home for those tasks |
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Background

1. The Legislative Reform Order (LRO) on governance reform requires us, over a three-year transitional period from July 2018, to move towards a smaller Council of 24 (ie 13 elected veterinary surgeons, six lay members, three vet school members, two veterinary nurses).

2. This LRO modernises our governance and requires us to increase the number of lay people on Council, and gives veterinary nurses a formal voice. It also increases the number of meetings, to improve responsiveness and ensure more efficient decision-making.

3. However, to ensure that the new structure works to the best advantage, it is now important to consider in more detail the interlocking roles of Council, Operational Board and the non-statutory committees (Standards, Education, Veterinary Nurses Council (for the purposes of the Veterinary Surgeons Act, the Veterinary Nurses Council is constituted as a Committee of RCVS Council), Audit and Risk, PIC/DC Liaison).

4. We also have the opportunity to review our governance structure, and how we people it, more broadly to ensure it is fit for purpose and allows the College to perform to the best of its abilities.

Issues and opportunities

5. Issues and opportunities arising from these fundamental changes were considered at an afternoon session of RCVS Council on 18 January 2018, and include:

   a) The Operational Board was put in place as a measure to help speed up decision making while Council was large in size and meeting infrequently. According to the LRO, it is set to be reviewed within two years (ie by July 2020). With Council meeting more frequently – six to eight times per year – there is the potential for duplication and confusion – clarity is required.

   b) The current Council agenda format includes a large section on hearing reports from committees, but they may not be meeting as frequently as Council – a new format is required, potentially with an alternating schedule for committee business to be reviewed.

   c) Although Council has, of late, met more frequently than March, June and November, those additional meetings have been in committee, so there has been a perceived lack of transparency; meanwhile private sessions are very useful for discussion of key issues at an early stage and to give due focus to strategy and risk.

   d) The change will give us a smaller pool from which to draw members of committees, so we will need to co-opt external experts (from the veterinary professions and elsewhere).

   e) There is a need to ensure non-regulatory work is better reflected in our governance structure.

   f) There is a need to ensure better horizon-scanning within our governance structure.

   g) It is important that Council maintains an ‘upper house’ role and can take oversight of operational issues, to ensure governance is based on a clear understanding of how such issues impact on the College’s ability to deliver the Strategic Plan, without becoming too
embedded in the day to day management of College business. [issue raised at March Council]

h) Longer term, the structure needs to be flexible enough to accommodate the regulation, or oversight of the regulation via a third party, of groups of associate members who might form part of a vet-led team

**Process to date**

6. Discussions around the governance change represented by the LRO itself took place over many years, latterly via a Working Party Chaired by Professor Stuart Reid, and the package was agreed by Council in March 2016. Since then there has been a lot of hard work by Council members, staff and members of the Defra team to bring the LRO to completion.

7. Discussion around the detail, and the committee structure to support this, began in earnest November 2017 when the new CEO was appointed. Key milestones have been as follows:
   a) A Council workshop on the issues, facilitated by senior staff, in January 2018
   b) An away day for the RCVS Senior Team to consider the issues in February 2018
   c) The development of broad options that were discussed by Operational Board and Council in March 2018 – simply put the choice was a much more strategic body or one that was more operational: a middle-way was preferred
   d) The refinement of these discussions into a proposal put before Operational Board in May 2018
   e) Discussion with RCVS staff during May 2018
   f) Further refinement of the proposal based on staff feedback, with updates to Operational Board by email
   g) The presentation of proposals (this document) to Council in June 2018

8. It is anticipated that initial changes will take place over a two-year period, with opportunities for review along the way. This is a new chapter for the College and it is important that implementation of change is taken at a pace that is sustainable for Council and staff, and also takes account of typical planning periods for meeting dates. It will also take some time for appointed members of committees to be put in place.

9. Following the various opportunities for general discussion that have taken place, it is important that decisions are made on 14 June so that the incoming President can define committee membership and to help the staff at Belgravia House organise appropriate meeting dates, facilities and staffing to support the new structure.

10. It is likely that change will continue to take place over time in an evolutionary way as the new approach beds in; it’s unlikely that these proposals will address all of the issues straight away.
Major proposed changes

11. It is proposed that the number of public Council meetings increases from the current four to six in the 2018-9 Presidential year and to eight in the following year.

12. A new Advancement of the Professions Committee (APC) will be introduced from summer 2018, to receive and consider reports on Fellowship, Leadership, Innovation, Mind Matters, Vet Futures and new projects TBC. It will also ensure that agreed strategy in these areas is met and provide a forum for discussion around the development of new activities under our Royal Charter role.

13. The Operational Board will cease from summer 2019, although the Officer team (two Vice-Presidents, President and Treasurer) will continue to meet regularly with senior staff around issues such as communications, events and stakeholder relationships. Joint Officers meetings with other organisations will continue. Staff remuneration will also be considered by the Officer Team, CEO and Director of HR. Other than remuneration, policy decisions will not be made by this group in isolation although they can make recommendations to Council/Committees.

14. A new Finance and Resources Committee (FRC) will be introduced from summer 2019 to pick up some operational issues once Operational Board drops away, for example, Estates, IT, budget, data issues, HR, service levels, information-gathering and some strategic communication issues. This will remove the need for some working groups although project boards will remain for large projects as per our protocol, which will report to FRC or other committees, depending on subject matter.

15. The number of times that standing (ie non-statutory) committees meet will remain as now for the next presidential year, and be reviewed in spring 2019 with a view to increasing all to four times per year for the 2019-20 presidential year, to ensure that the frequency of committee meetings does not become the limiting factor.

16. A Council skills matrix system will be introduced in order better to match skills with committee/working party roles (initial questionnaire has been circulated) and help us to understand where development could be supported for less experienced members.

17. A transparent appointment process for co-opted members of committees will be developed over the summer.

18. Chairs will be encouraged to cancel meetings, or hold them remotely, if there is insufficient business. Equally, ad hoc phone/Skype meetings can be called if essential or, as now, decisions made between meetings by email.

† The name for this committee has been debated long and hard…other options include Charter Committee, Development of the Professions Committee, Development Committee
Other points for note/consideration

Frequency and focus of meetings

19. All Council meetings to be held in public, with the option for an afternoon ‘in committee’ where required to discuss confidential matters. ‘Unclassified’ will be the default position for documents unless there is a good reason for discussion to be confidential, for example, to allow for unfettered discussion at early stages in policy development, because personal or commercially-sensitive data is being discussed, or because risks to the College are under discussion that would be further increased by discussion in public.

20. All standing committees will report to Council; as now, statutory committees will deliver reports for note. Reports from committees will be uploaded to the new electronic boardroom system (under development) so they can be read as soon as possible after the meeting has taken place.

21. Agendas for the Council meetings after the month in which standing committee meetings are held will take reports/consider escalated decisions; other meetings will focus on strategy, risk and horizon-scanning (with a deep dive into other areas on rotation) and other matters arising.

22. The Council meeting in July will be part of RCVS Day, as now, and of limited scope.

23. At this point we recommend the reinstatement of ‘committee week’ (ie all of the key committees taking place during a single week in the designated month) so that meeting rooms can be block-booked and journeys for Council members streamlined. However, this has both pros and cons and Council’s view on the practicality of this arrangement would be helpful.

24. Disciplinary Committee is not included on the schedule below – will meet as required, as now.

25. Preliminary Investigation Committee is not included on the schedule – will meet twice a month, as now.

Composition

26. Composition of Council and statutory committees will be as per the two Legislative Reform Orders to the Veterinary Surgeons Act.

27. Composition of standing committees is tbc in detail but with Council members in the majority, and experts co-opted as required. A maximum and minimum number of members for each committee might be set, but specific skills requirements may vary over time and depending on the strategic focus at any given point.

28. The APC will largely comprise chairs of working groups or Council ‘sponsors’ for the relevant projects.

29. Committee Chairs could be vet / lay but always Council members; Vice-Chairs could be co-opted. Chairs will receive training in the role and be appraised annually. Consideration also to be given to appraisal of all committee members. With more frequent meetings it is anticipated that Chairs may not always be available – Vice-Chairs to be trained and take a more active role, although overall responsibility remains with the Chair.
30. Committee membership will be on a three-year basis, subject to annual renewal. There may be some staggering of membership for the two proposed new committees.

31. Observers will only be permitted at the discretion of the Chair and will not have voting rights.

32. Members of the Officer Team do not have automatic rights to sit in on all committee meetings, to signal confidence in the delegation process.

33. All Council members will sit on at least one committee as soon as elected, rather than waiting until year two, as now.

34. Quorum will always be a simple majority of the total number of Council / committee members, for example, committee of eight, quorum = 5; committee of nine, quorum also = 5; remote votes may be taken for decisions made at Council (for example, Officer elections) but will not form part of the quorum. Whether the committee members are Council members or co-opted will not be a factor in the quorum.

People
35. A greater focus to be given to induction and training for the specific roles that are being given to Council members – for example, chairing, media training, dealing with conflicts of interest, taking a strategic view, governance, unconscious bias etc. If there are key themes that cut across committees they could be bundled into all-Council training days or an off-site development day.

36. As outlined above, appraisals to be introduced for committee Chairs, and consideration to be given to broadening this to all Council and committee members.

37. In broader terms, we now invest well in staff development and training, which is only appropriate, but Council members play an equally key part in the organisation and it is therefore fitting that we start to consider their individual development needs as well. This focus may also help to encourage a greater diversity of potential Council members to stand for election, including those earlier in their career, as well as demonstrating to practices (and other workplaces) the benefit that can be brought back to the organisation.

Supporting structure
38. Subcommittee and working party meetings will feed into the structure as relevant – this will be considered further once broad agreement on the new structure has been reached.

39. A governance framework for the new associate professionals/accredited professions will be considered in due course.

40. Terms of reference and delegation procedures will come to Council at a later date once agreement on the framework has been reached. It is unlikely that there will be major changes to the delegation scheme for existing committees, as they work well. The current work of the Operational Board is likely to be split across the two new committees, Officers and Council. A draft attempt at this division of labour is suggested at Annex A.
41. Meanwhile there will be a focus on improved communication around key College activities to Council, including regular email updates and ‘speed-read’ documents on the history of policy changes. The new-style electronic *RCVS News* (to be launched soon) will also include detail of Council and committee decisions.

42. There will be a continued focus on improving relationships between staff and Council – and including co-opted committee members in the future. For example, with more committee strategy days that involve both Council and staff members. Staff who write papers to be invited to field questions at Council meetings, where appropriate (as they do at committee meetings).

43. The addition of a Research Officer to the staff team will help in providing evidence base for papers and proposals.

44. Greater consideration to be given to succession planning for Officer roles.

45. Ongoing work to be carried out around encouraging a broader range of candidates to stand for election or apply for appointed roles, to ensure that Council reflects both the professions and the public that it serves.

**Agreed principles**

46. At the March 2018 meeting, Council agreed a set of principles that should be used as a lodestone against which to review any proposed new structure. Such a structure needs to ensure:
   a. Diversity is not negatively impacted (gender, age, ethnicity, breadth of veterinary roles)
   b. Clarity of decision-making
   c. Transparency of accountability
   d. Effective and efficient decision-making
   e. Best people for the job, not just best jobs for the people
   f. It encourages a collaborative approach – across the professions, across the RCVS team
   g. A manageable workload for Council and committee members
   h. A manageable workload for staff, especially Council and committee secretaries
   i. Reflective of the veterinary professions and the public they serve – representative of, not representing

**Risks**

47. As with any proposed change, there are opportunities but also risks. The following risks are to be considered when reviewing the potential new structure. Those which are not felt to be adequately mitigated at this point will be added to the corporate risk register.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk</th>
<th>Potential mitigation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The enhanced number of Council meetings and the additional committee meetings that flow from this may overload staff resources in terms of secretariat and paper writing etc</td>
<td>Additional staff resources will be considered. In addition, improved staff training on minute-writing, presenting an argument, managing committees etc will be provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk</td>
<td>Potential mitigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. There will be increased pressure on meeting rooms</td>
<td>Serious consideration to be given to Disciplinary Committee meeting in external facility on a permanent basis – or Council/committee – depending on which is most practicable. These demands will be fed into the Estates Strategy for longer-term solutions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| C. Smaller pool of Council members | Skills matrix will help to deploy skills in the most appropriate way, and we will need to put more resources into training and development (and improved induction)  
Diversity and breadth of experience across a committee will also be taken into account  
Skills gaps on committees to be filled by co-opted members |
| D. Lay people recruitment will not be complete in time for committee selection round | Places will have to be allocated for generic lay members in this first year; skills matrix to be completed for future years  
Specific induction for lay people |
| E. Turnaround of minutes/papers etc between the increased number of meetings may be problematic | Papers will be issued one week, rather than two weeks, before each meeting  
If papers are late they will be held for the next meeting – less of an issue if meetings are more frequent |
| F. Workload on Council members may be prohibitive, which may affect diversity | Aim to ensure that Council members’ availability is taken into account when allotting committee roles  
Longer term, consideration to be given to salaried roles with greater security over recompense in a given year |
| G. Smaller Council may allow for individuals with a specific agenda to dominate | Majority of work will be carried out at committee level where elected Council members will be balanced with appointed Council members and co-opted committee members |
### Risk and Potential mitigation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk</th>
<th>Potential mitigation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| H. Potential lack of transparency over unelected individuals becoming more involved in committee work | - Declarations of interest and biographies to be published online for all those engaged with College business  
- Transparent process for co-opting of committee members to be developed. NB in the first year we may need to be more pragmatic given time constraints  
- Greater visibility online for all working groups and subcommittees (excepting those engaged with appeals) |
| I. This structure may not be workable in reality even if it appears so on paper | - A full review should take place at the end of the 2020-21 presidential year – at which point Council will have come down to its smallest size |

### Questions for Council

48. Council is invited to comment on the paper as a whole, and specifically the key changes and proposed meeting schedule, with particular reference to the following questions:

- Does the proposed structure and schedule address the issues raised in previous meetings?
- Does it adequately adhere to the agreed broad principles?
- Do the presented mitigations adequately address the potential risks?
- Is Council happy to approve the proposals, with built in review periods?
## Annex A: Proposed meeting schedules

### July 2018 to July 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>July</th>
<th>August</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>October</th>
<th>November</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VN Council</td>
<td>For VNC to decide</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIC/DC Liaison</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audit and Risk</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advancement of the Professions</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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</table>

It is proposed that the relationship between Council and Committee meetings is reviewed in spring 2019, with a view to increasing the number of committee meetings as outlined below. We continue to aim to keep August and December largely committee free.

### July 2019 to July 2020 and onwards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>July</th>
<th>August</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>October</th>
<th>November</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Council</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance and Resources</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VN Council</td>
<td>For VNC to decide</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIC/DC Liaison</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Audit and Risk</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advancement of the Professions</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*consideration to be given to this becoming a strategic day for Council each year – held off site, facilitated – planning for forthcoming presidential year
### Current terms of reference for Operational Board

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current terms of reference for Operational Board</th>
<th>Body responsible over time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present a strategic plan to Council for approval each year</td>
<td>Council to do this directly, working with internal and external stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present an annual business plan and budget to Council for approval and recommend proposed fee changes</td>
<td>FRC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure that the strategic and annual plans and budget are implemented, within limits of variation approved by Council</td>
<td>Council to do this directly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay down procedures for budgeting and financial control</td>
<td>FRC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approve expenditure from the contingency fund</td>
<td>FRC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek the approval of Council for expenditure from the College’s reserves</td>
<td>FRC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manage the assets and investments of the College</td>
<td>FRC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manage organisational risks, maintain a risk register and oversee internal audit reviews</td>
<td>FRC, working with ARC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oversee the appointment of professional advisers to the College</td>
<td>Council or FRC depending on nature of advisers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approve rates of travelling and subsistence expenses and recompense for loss of earnings</td>
<td>FRC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authorise the sealing of documents</td>
<td>Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advise Council on corporate governance matters, including the terms of reference and composition of committees</td>
<td>FRC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-ordinate the work of committees</td>
<td>Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approve the setting up subcommittees, working parties and other such bodies and determine their members</td>
<td>Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep under review arrangements for Council elections</td>
<td>FRC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommend to Council the names of persons for election as Honorary Associates and Honorary Fellowships of the College and for the award of prizes, in accordance with the Honours, Awards and Membership Bye-Laws</td>
<td>Officer team and committee chairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determine external representation and conduct external relations</td>
<td>Officer team and Senior staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Meeting Council

Date 14 June 2018

Title Brexit Contingencies and Brexit Principles Update

Classification Unclassified

Summary This paper lists a number of plans that the College intends to put into immediate effect in the event of a ‘no deal’ Brexit, and asks Council for its approval.

The paper also suggests an additional ‘Brexit policy’ to add to those approved by Council in 2017.

Decisions required As outlined in the paper.

Attachments RCVS Brexit Principles

Author Ben Myring
Senior Policy & Public Affairs Officer
b.myring@rcvs.org.uk
Brexit: Contingency planning for a no-deal scenario

Introduction

1. At the time of writing, it remains very unclear what relationship the United Kingdom will have with the European Union after Brexit, including in matters related to the veterinary profession. It remains possible that the UK will fail to reach an agreement with the EU. In this ‘no deal’ situation it is anticipated that measures will be taken by government to remove all reference to the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications (MRPQ) Directive from the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966. This will give the RCVS maximum flexibility in creating new arrangements for the registration of EU-qualified veterinary surgeons.

2. In order to ensure that the College is prepared for this eventuality, consideration has been given to a number of proposals which Council are now invited to consider.

3. In addition, the RCVS Brexit Taskforce have recently reviewed the College’s Brexit Principles & Policies and have suggested a new policy in relation to veterinary research. This is included at the end of the paper for Council’s consideration and approval.

Recognition of Veterinary degrees from EU veterinary schools.

4. At its March 2018 meeting, RCVS Council agreed a position on the College’s accreditation functions post-Brexit, namely that the College should continue to act through mutual recognition agreements with other international accreditors. Specifically, that the College should seek a mutual recognition agreement with the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE) of the type that already exists with the South African Veterinary Council (SAVC) and the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC).

5. A detailed agreement with EAEVE may not be reached before March 2019. It is proposed that, in the event of a ‘no-deal’ Brexit, recognition is given to graduates of EAEVE–accredited and EAEVE-approved veterinary schools for a transitional period. Should no agreement be made with EAEVE then alternative long-term options will be presented to Council.

6. Council is asked to confirm that it is content with the above proposal.

Nationality

7. At present, the MRPQ Directive does not ordinarily apply to nationals of non-EU countries who qualify at EU vet schools. This creates an anomaly where, for instance, a United States citizen who qualifies from the University College Dublin School of Veterinary Medicine cannot register in the UK without first undertaking the Statutory Examination.
8. Council is asked to confirm that, if the post-Brexit landscape allows, nationality should not be a consideration in future registrations (noting that the College’s registration requirements may not impact visa requirements).

**Addition to the RCVS Brexit Principles & Policies**

9. The Brexit Taskforce recently reviewed the College’s Brexit Principles and Policies, and was content that they remained relevant and appropriate. However, it suggested adding the following policy under the ‘Vital veterinary work continues to get done’ principle:

10. “Advocating that no restrictions are placed on the free movement of academics, or an access to evidence, that would jeopardise veterinary research in the UK.”

11. Council are asked to confirm whether they are content to adopt this additional policy.
The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS): Guiding principles for a post-Brexit world

The role of the RCVS

1. The RCVS is the regulatory body for veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses in the United Kingdom. We are responsible under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 for keeping the register of veterinary surgeons eligible to practise in the UK, setting standards for veterinary education and regulating the professional conduct of veterinary surgeons.

2. The RCVS also exercise powers under our Royal Charter to award Fellowships, Diplomas and Certificates to veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and others.

3. The RCVS aims to enhance society through improved animal health and welfare. We do this by setting, upholding and advancing the educational, ethical and clinical standards of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses.

Brexit: challenges and solutions

4. Brexit presents numerous challenges to the veterinary profession, but many of these challenges can be addressed by the profession itself, and others with appropriate support from government.

5. The veterinary profession in the UK is very reliant on graduates of European veterinary schools to meet domestic demand for veterinary services. Over half of vets registering in the UK each year come from overseas, the vast majority from the European Union. Some sectors, such as public health and the meat trade, are especially reliant on European workers. Any rapid reduction in numbers, either through ending the current system of mutual recognition or by restrictions on immigration, are likely to cause significant labour shortages which would jeopardise public health, animal welfare, and economic production.

6. However, given sufficient time and increased funding for veterinary education, such shortages could be addressed by boosting the number of veterinary graduates in the UK. Brexit also creates the opportunity to rethink the role of paraprofessionals in the UK (particularly veterinary nurses), to work to boost retention rates, and the take a fresh look at broadening participation in the veterinary profession.

7. In the longer term, if the risk of veterinary shortages is mitigated by boosting the numbers of UK veterinary graduates, then post-Brexit there may be an opportunity to ensure that only graduates of overseas schools meeting UK-equivalent standards are entitled to register in the UK. This will increase veterinary standards at home while encouraging improved standards (and the verification of those standards) overseas.
RCVS Brexit Principles

Principle: Vital veterinary work continues to get done.

Policies: We can achieve this through:

1. Ensuring EU vets and veterinary nurses (VNs) currently working in the UK are allowed to stay indefinitely; ensuring that current and future graduates of UK vet schools, regardless of their nationality, are prioritised for UK work visas or equivalent.

2. Ensuring that any reduction in the migration of veterinary surgeons and VNs from overseas is offset by an increase in the number of home-grown vets & VNs; this would require an appropriate increase in funding and capacity for UK veterinary education.

3. Developing new measures to support veterinary surgeons and VNs to have thriving and successful careers and thereby boost the rates of retention within the professions.

4. Upskilling and extending the role of veterinary nurses to enable a multi skilled workforce, employed in roles better suiting their skills and sufficiently adaptable to any changes in employment patterns.

Principle: High standards of animal health and welfare remain and improve.

Policies: We can achieve this through:

1. Moving towards a reform of mutual recognition so that only graduates from schools accredited by organisations working in accordance with IAWG standards (e.g. RCVS, Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC), American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), South African Veterinary Council (SAVC), and the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE) are eligible for mutual recognition.

2. Advocating that, if freedom of movement for veterinary surgeons from the EU is to be reduced, then restrictions should focus on graduates from non-EAEVE accredited schools.

3. Continuing to contribute to discussions on advancing standards of global accreditation. Being active on the international stage whether at the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), EAEVE, the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) or AVMA to ensure the UK voice is heard.

4. Ensuring that any new regulatory frameworks replacing existing EU regimes whether in medicines or employment, should uphold the appropriate high standards of animal welfare.

Principle: RCVS is a global force for good

Policies: We can achieve this through:

1. Ensuring that UK vets and VNs working abroad continue to be held up as exemplars of the profession, and that their rights to continue to live and work in the EU are protected.

2. Expanding our membership globally, with an aspiration to double it over 10 years;

3. Showing leadership by developing UK Mind Matters Initiative into a global standard for mental health and wellbeing, developing a world leading evidence based veterinary medicine hub that will transform animal treatment globally, becoming renowned for veterinary innovation, and ensuring we provide leadership at a global level.

4. Working with developing countries, both bilaterally and through overseas regulators and agencies, to improve the accreditation of veterinary schools (as we have recently begun with India).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Meeting</strong></th>
<th>Council</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
<td>14 June 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title</strong></td>
<td>ARC annual report to Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Classification</strong></td>
<td>Unclassified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary</strong></td>
<td>ARC 2018 annual report to Council</td>
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<td><strong>Decisions required</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Annexes</strong></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Author**  | Corrie McCann  
Operations Director  
Tel: 020 7202 0724  
Email: c.mccann@rcvs.org.uk |
Audit and Risk Committee – Annual Report to Council 2018

Background
1. The Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) supports RCVS Council by reviewing the comprehensiveness and reliability of assurances and internal controls in meeting the Council’s oversight responsibilities. We oversee the system of risk and control but do not carry out audits directly. We also review the Annual Report and Accounts and the audit findings letter from the external auditors.

2. Since my last report the committee has met three times. We said goodbye to Neil Smith, who left the committee last July, and welcomed three new members Niall Connell, Victor Olowe and Janice Shardlow, who bring a wide range of skills to the committee.

Risks and assurance
3. ARC overseas a rolling programme of assurance activity linked to the Risk Register. Work can be carried out to provide independent and third party assurance internally, by external suppliers, or by extending the annual audit work carried out by the external auditors of RCVS.

4. The corporate risk register is presented to each meeting for consideration and the committee look in detail at a departmental risk register.

5. This year we have looked at the departmental risk registers of the Education, Professional Conduct (complaints) and Communication departments.

6. The registers reflect the wide range of activities carried out and time was spent looking into the detail of activities covered in order to gain a better understanding of the risks. Suggestions made included reviewing scores to reflect the impact of mitigation and more dissemination of information. We also commented on how departmental risks should be moved to the main risk register and will be looking at the outcomes of the work being carried out calibrating the registers.

7. I attended the Veterinary Nurses Council Strategy Day and gave a presentation of risk looking at both threats and opportunities.

8. We also received and considered reports on three other areas of activity during the year – the recruitment of the CEO, controls around investments, and the expenses policy.

Review of Auditors and Annual Accounts
9. As part of their remit ARC have to consider the appointment of external auditors and make recommendations to RCVS Council. A review of auditors was carried out in September 2017 and RCVS Council approved the recommendation from ARC to appoint Crowe Clark Whitehall Llp (CCW).

10. CCW attended our January meeting to discuss the audit plan, which covered the objectives, approach and key audit risks. At our April meeting the annual report and accounts were discussed in detail when CCW presented their final audit findings report.
11. The external audit and RCVS annual report is a major piece of work each year that provides assurances to the veterinary and veterinary nursing professions, as well as Council. The Accounts are prepared under the Statement of Recommended Practice, Accounting and Reporting by Charities SORP (FRS102), this aids credibility with outside readers and consistency between years.

12. The Committee has no matters they wish to bring to the attention of Council on the accounts, letter of representation and audit findings report.

**European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher education (ENQA)**

13. RCVS has applied for membership of ENQA which requires demonstrating compliance across a range of their standards and as part of meeting their requirements a process for internal quality assurance is required.

14. RCVS has departmental internal quality assurance and the Education Committee form a middle tier of assurance. ARC will receive assurances from both these sources and oversee them. The terms of reference for ARC have been updated to reflect this work and were agreed by RCVS Council at its January meeting.

15. The program of work - Internal Quality Assurance of work plan 2018, was presented to ARC and we look forward to reviewing progress against the plan later in the year.

16. Three members of ARC met with the ENQA visitation panel and provided them with details about our approach to the work. An interesting experience being on the other side of the table!

**GDPR**

17. Progress towards compliance with GDPR has been reported to each meeting. A small team of RCVS Staff have been meeting weekly to monitor progress and policies have been drawn up or updated. A series of FAQ’s is also on the website for members. Staff have been issued with instructions and departmental champions appointed.

18. We will continue to receive updates to provide assurances that policies are being complied with.

**Thanks**

19. The ARC thanks the senior staff and the Treasurer for their assistance and guidance during the year and compliments them on the work undertaken as a result of the committee’s recommendations.

Ms Elizabeth Butler Chair (External member)
Dr Niall Connell (RCVS Council member)
Mr. Richard Davis (RCVS Council member)
Mr. Victor Olowe (External member)
Ms Judith Rutherford (External member)
Ms Janice Shardlow (External member)
<table>
<thead>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>14 June 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Education Committee Report</td>
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<tr>
<td>Classification</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
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<td>Decisions required</td>
<td>By Council: To receive and note the minutes.</td>
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<td>Attachments</td>
<td>Education Committee report of 2 May 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Britta Crawford Committee Secretary 020 7202 0777 <a href="mailto:b.crawford@rcvs.org.uk">b.crawford@rcvs.org.uk</a></td>
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Education Committee
Minutes of the meeting held on 2 May 2018

Present: Professor Ewan Cameron
*Mr David Catlow
Dr Niall Connell
Professor Susan Dawson - Chair
Professor Gary England
*Professor Tim Greet
*Dr Jacqui Molyneux
Dr Susan (Sue) Paterson
Dr Chris Tufnell - Operational Board

By invitation: Dr Clare Tapsfield-Wright - PQSC Chairman
*Professor Jill Maddison - CertAVP Sub-Committee Chair
Professor Stephen May - Chair of CPD policy working party
*Professor Tim Greet - Chair of Diploma Sub-Committee
*Dr Jacqui Molyneux - Operational Board
Dr Tom Witte - Advanced Practitioner Working Party

In attendance: Mr Duncan Ash - Senior Education Officer
Mrs Britta Crawford - Committee Secretary
Ms Naila Hassanali - Senior Education Officer
Mrs Victoria Hedges - Examinations Manager
Miss Laura Hogg - Senior Education Officer
Miss Anne Jermey - Education Manager
Mr Jordan Nicholls - Senior Education Officer
Ms Chris Warman - Director of Education

* Absent

Apologies for absence and welcome

1. There were apologies received from Tim Greet, David Catlow, Jacqui Molyneux, Jill Maddison and Mike Herrtage.

Declarations of interest

2. Sue Paterson is Vice President of BSAVA.

Minutes

3. The minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2018 were received and approved.

Matters arising
4. At the meeting in February, the Committee sought clarification on reciprocal recognition between RCVS and SAVC now that registration in South Africa is conditional on performing one year of community service. South Africa had introduced this requirement after the agreement had been signed, and it is part of South African law and not a SAVC requirement. The agreement states that recognised qualifications will be accepted by RCVS and SAVC as the basis for registration, “subject to meeting any other requirements which may be set out in the relevant legislation of the country or state in which registration is sought”. Chris Warman contacted the AVBC to discuss the matter and a joint letter has been sent to the SAVC asking that graduates from the UK and Australasia be exempt from this community service. SAVC’s response will be reported back to the Committee.

Education department update

5. The Director of Education, Ms Chris Warman, gave an oral update on the work of the Education department. The Committee heard that there has been some progress with the PDP quick wins. RCVS is in discussion with the BSAVA regarding use of its on-line materials to assist new graduates and mentors. There have also been discussions with the IT department regarding changes to the PDR system to substitute an entrustability scale for the current confidence-rating scale and reduce emphasis on recording numbers of cases and we hope to move forward on these changes as soon as possible.

6. New volunteers are being recruited to the CPD pilot, both individuals and via the major employers group. So far 68 new volunteers have signed up, but this doesn’t include volunteers from the major employers. The IT team has developed an RCVS ‘app’ to use for the pilot that can be further developed based on feedback and then rolled out to anyone who wishes to use it.

7. At the February meeting the Committee considered a paper on Brexit which proposed that, if the MRPQ was not in place following Brexit, RCVS should seek a mutual recognition agreement with EAEVE. The Committee’s views were reported to Council and they accepted this position.

8. The Committee heard that the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC) confirmed the announcement yesterday by the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) through its newsletter, Vet Voice, that the Veterinary Surgeons Board of South Australia (VSBSA) has chosen to resign from AVBC.

9. AVBC has responsibility for advising on veterinary school accreditation, registration of veterinary specialists and examining overseas graduates with degrees not recognised by AVBC. In December 2017, the VSBSA informed the other eight member veterinary boards of AVBC, the AVA and NZVA of its intention to resign at the end of 2018. The management committee of AVBC and other members have been seeking further information to clarify the boards concerns with a view to achieving satisfactory resolution of these issues.

10. Chris Warman reported that AVBC is hopeful that it will resolve this issue and that a further update will be given at the IAWG meeting in Barcelona on 5 May. The Committee does not need to take any action at this point but may need to consider the implications for the mutual
recognition agreement if the issue is not resolved. The school that would be affected is Adelaide which currently has 9 graduates registered with RCVS. In May 2017, the RCVS gave the school 3 year’s accreditation, so a revisit will be due in 2020. It would be necessary to discuss a recognition agreement with the VSBSA to ensure that UK graduates could continue to be eligible to work in South Australia.

11. The Committee heard that Fellowship applications are currently being assessed, all decisions will be finalised at the Board meeting in June. The 3-year review on progress will be put to Council in September/November.

12. The Diploma written exams will take place in July. There are 4 candidates in 2 subjects - Cardiology and Small Animal Surgery (Orthopaedics).

**CPD Audit Analysis**

13. In February 2018, Education Committee received a paper about the 2017 CPD audit of Veterinary Surgeons. This further paper contains the full analysis for those audited. Additional analysis has been presented to the Committee identifying country of graduation, year of graduation and number of vets working at PSS-accredited practices for the non-compliance group as requested at the February meeting. The Committee welcomed the detailed analysis and approved the plans for the 2018 audit.

**CPD Non-compliance**

14. At its meeting in October 2017, the Committee discussed potential changes to the current, flexible, CPD requirement, in particular the RCVS CPD requirement of a rolling three-year cycle, as changing the requirement to a three-year cycle with a set start and end date may make it easier to sanction serially non-compliant veterinary surgeons. The Committee agreed that it would be helpful to look at how a fixed cycle might be introduced, to try to ensure that there were no ‘unforeseen consequences’ before making a final decision. The outcomes of further internal discussions were presented, which detailed a number of options.

15. Following discussion, it was agreed by the Committee that there would be no changes to the system in advance of the final decision on whether the College would adopt an outcomes based CPD approach. This is to avoid confusion within the profession and the potential of giving mixed messages about the CPD requirements. Proposals based on the outcomes of the CPD pilot work will be presented to Council in March 2019 and the Committee agreed that it would be helpful to include recommendations on this issue as part of those proposals.

16. In the course of the discussions, the Committee agreed that the College should move towards mandatory use of the PDR system for all members over the next three years, and that it would start to publicise this now in order to give the profession plenty of notice. Veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses who were non-compliant would automatically be asked to use the PDR from now on, unless a valid reason could be given. This would make it easier to monitor their progress over time. It was also suggested that the PDR should be mandatory for those who have less than
10 hours CPD in any three year period. Other suggestions that should be considered as part of final proposals to be made next March were that there should be an annual minimum number of hours to be completed (for example, 15 hours per year for veterinary surgeons), which could be combined with either a rolling or fixed 3-year requirement; that any veterinary surgeon returning from a career break should be asked to complete 35 hours of CPD in their first year and that the electronic recording system should continue to show any previous 3-years as compliant.

Strategic Plan

17. The Committee noted the progress updates to the Strategic Plan.

Graduate Outcomes

18. The Graduate Outcomes papers were considered at the afternoon meeting which included the Committee and members of the Veterinary Schools Council.

CertAVP

19. The minutes from the CertAVP sub-committee held on the 6 March were noted by the Committee.

Statutory Exam Update

20. The committee was given an oral update in relation to the progress being made for the development of the new statutory membership examination. Two OSCE development days had been held and subsequently the design of this examination is progressing well. Guidance is currently being drawn up to distribute to veterinary schools who have expressed an interest in hosting the examination. With regards to the Multiple Choice examination, the team are continuing discussions with the Vet Schools Council (VSC) about access to the bank of questions used by the veterinary schools. The committee asked about the need for a contingency plan should the agreement with VSC prove difficult and it was agreed that a decision would need to be made following the meeting scheduled for the week of 14 May. The Chair of the Veterinary Schools Council confirmed that there he knew of no obstacles to an agreement being reached. With regard to the Open Book professionalism examination the committee was informed that a question writing session had been completed and it is likely that questions would be shared with both Edinburgh and Nottingham Vet Schools, who have provided access to their question banks.

Primary Qualifications Sub-Committee (PQSC)

Report of sub-committee meeting held on the 19th April 2018.

21. The Committee received the minutes from the PQSC meeting of 19 April. It was noted that the report following the visitation to the University of Cambridge in March 2018 was now back with the Department for the statutory two-month consultation period.

22. The team of visitors for the RVC visitation in November 2018 was ratified by the Committee.
23. The request from St. George’s University in Grenada for a focussed revisit, looking at the recommendations from the previous visitation report, was received and accepted. RCVS would write to SGU to liaise over dates for this revisit.

24. It was also noted that the request from Ross University to be accredited under the terms of the AVMA agreement had been looked at again by PQSC, which reaffirmed its position that should Ross University wish to have RCVS accreditation then it would need to request an RCVS visitation, as the School is not covered under the terms of the agreement that RCVS has with AVMA.

Surrey Report

25. The report and University response following the year-four visit to Surrey in March 2018 was presented to Education Committee for review. As no accreditation decision was being made at this point, the Committee was asked to agree on the feedback to be sent to Surrey. Education Committee agreed with PQSC that the School should be thanked for its response and informed that it had been good to see the progress that had been made since the 2017 visitation.

26. Whilst many of the final year plans were still to be implemented, it had been positive to note that visitor recommendations were being taken seriously and RCVS looked forward to seeing the results of these implementations in 2019.

27. The Committee asked, however, that in the feedback to Surrey it should be stressed that many of the standards could only be assessed as “reasonably assured” at the time of writing of the report. It needed to be made clear that these elements would not be formally assessed until the final visitation, although RCVS looked forward to seeing these reasonable assurances translated into practice from September onwards.

28. It was also requested that the feedback should make it clear to the University that all students would need to have access to both paper and electronic resources whilst out on rotation at the partner practices.

   **Action: RCVS to feed Committee comments back to Surrey University**

29. Education Committee was then presented with a plan for visiting all partner practices being used by Surrey for their IMR placements, which all needed to be inspected as part of the final visitation. The plan had been agreed by PQSC at its last meeting.

30. Based on approximately 45 practices being used for IMR teaching, it was envisaged that visitors should inspect these practices in pairs from September 2018 onwards, so that all practices will have been visited before the actual visitation. During the week of the final visit, the visit team of 12 would inspect 12 of these practices to reassure the team of the QA process followed during the final year. This would also enable representatives from SAVC and AVBC to sample some of the practices for themselves.
31. With only four members of the potential Surrey team being based in the UK, it was suggested that RCVS should co-opt additional expertise from the RCVS list of visitors to assist in visiting practices. The Education Department would draw up a schedule of practice visits and then approach visitors for their availability in attending.

32. A training day would then be arranged where the visitation team could sit down with the additional visitors and, using the practice rubrics and reports produced from the visits, discuss the findings of these visits as a whole team. It was agreed that this was a realistic way forward and that work should commence on arranging this. However, the Committee felt that it would be prudent to visit all 45 practices prior to the visitation week in February 2019, which would enable some practices to be re-visited if necessary.

**Nottingham Report**

33. The report and University response following the visitation to Nottingham University in 2017 was presented to the Committee for review. PQSC had discussed the report and response at length and felt that there had been no major issues arising from it. Education Committee welcomed the School’s achievement of 30% male students, and it was noted that discussions had already taken place between Karen Braithwaite and the RCVS Education Department regarding the repetition within RCVS standards. This feedback had been very helpful and would be presented to PQSC later this year.

34. Education Committee agreed with PQSC that the BVM BVS from the School of Veterinary Medicine and Science at the University of Nottingham receive continued accreditation for seven years.

   **Action: RCVS to write to Nottingham with accreditation decision**

**Surrey Terms of reference for external examiners**

35. It was noted that Professor Mark Bowen and Mrs Jennifer Hammond had agreed to act as RCVS external examiners to Surrey and the Committee ratified the draft terms of reference to cover their role in overseeing the Surrey final year assessments.

**ENQA update**

36. One of the specific issues that arose out of the ENQA visitation was the lack of student representation on RCVS committees. The ENQA panel had commented that students were undeniably one of the largest groups of stakeholders in the accreditation process and they felt that there should be student involvement wherever possible. Whilst this recommendation would present a challenge for RCVS Council, whose membership was specified in the Veterinary Surgeons Act, it was acknowledged that there were fewer barriers to student inclusion on other committees.

37. Whilst there would be logistical issues to resolve, such as selection and training of student representatives, Education Committee agreed in principle to a student voting member on both PQSC and Education Committee.
38. The CEO thanked everyone who had participated in the ENQA visitation for their support and all agreed that it had been an excellent example of the College team, in its broadest sense, working together.

Advanced Practitioner

39. The Committee noted the updated list of Advanced Practitioners.

New Qualifications

40. The Committee received the current list of qualifications approved for inclusion in the Registers and a list of recently approved qualifications that would be included in the next version of the list. Anne Jermey said that qualifications, which had been added to the list since it reopened in 2015, showed the awarding body as well as the name of the qualification and post-nominals. As the list now included a number of postgraduate certificates with similar names awarded by different organisations and awarding bodies, BSAVA postgraduate certificates were shown on the list as BSAVA PgCert for clarity. However, holders of these or other qualifications on the list might choose to use a different abbreviation on their own stationery from the post-nominals that RCVS had agreed for inclusion in the Registers.

Any other business

41. Dr Paterson questioned whether distributed models of veterinary education as adopted, for example, by Nottingham and now Surrey, may in the long term affect how many EMS places practices are willing and able to offer. Dr Paterson was assured that this was being reviewed as part of the graduate outcomes project and that the VSCEC were currently considering a “think piece” on EMS and would be giving its views to the Graduate Outcomes Working Group.

42. The committee was asked to consider a request from a veterinary surgeon who had recently been awarded Specialist status in Veterinary Dentistry (Equine), who was previously listed as an Advanced Practitioner (AP) in Equine Dentistry and who wanted to remain listed as both a Specialist and an Advanced Practitioner. In similar cases where an AP had later become a Specialist in the same area, it was current procedure for the AP status to lapse in favour of the Specialist status. There was some discussion about the ethos of the two separate tracks, however it was decided that to be listed as both an AP and a Specialist in the same area could cause confusion to the public as it was essentially duplication. It was agreed that, where a veterinary surgeon is an Advanced Practitioner and a Specialist in the same area, they would only be permitted to remain listed as either a Specialist or an AP. In this particular case, the veterinary surgeon was also listed as an Advanced Practitioner in Equine Practice, and the committee felt it made more sense to be listed as a Specialist in a specific area whilst also being an AP in a more general field.

Date of next meeting
43.  3 October 2018 at 10am

Britta Crawford
Committee Secretary
May 2018

b.crawford@rcvs.org.uk
Minutes of the Standards Committee held on Wednesday, 25 April 2018 at 10 am at Belgravia House, 62-64 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2AF

Members:  
Mrs E Acaster  
Dr M A Donald  
Mrs J M Dyer  
Dr M O Greene  
Professor R A Hammond*  
Mr D C Hutchison  
Miss R M Marshall  
Dr K A Richards  
Chair

In attendance:  
Ms E C Ferguson  
Registrar  
Mr N Oldham  
Standards and Advisory Manager  
Ms B Jinks  
Senior Standards and Advisory Officer  
Mrs V Price  
Senior Standards and Advisory Officer  
Professor S A May  
President  
Dr N Connell  
Council member  
Ms A Boag  
Junior Vice-President  
Dr C Scudamore  
Council member  
Ms L Grannell  
Senior Manager, Practice Standards Scheme  
(Present for agenda item 05(c))  
Mr A Roberts  
Director of Leadership and Innovation  
(Present for agenda item 04(a))  
Mr J Moodie  
Representative from VetFone  
(Present for agenda item 04(a))

*absent
Apologies for absence and welcome

1. The Chair welcomed Professor May, Ms Boag, Dr Connell, and Dr Scudamore to the meeting as observers.

Declarations of interest

2. Declarations of interest were received from:

   Ms Boag: In relation to AI 04(a), telemedicine, it was stated that Vets Now are currently trialling a free “web chat” service.

Minutes of last meetings held on 24 January 2018

3. The minutes were noted and the following amendment was agreed:

   - Regarding paragraph 7 it was agreed that the sentence: “The Committee agreed that there was no evidence of any issue/trends” should be changed to: “Given the current information, the Committee agreed that there was no evidence of any issue/trends”

   Action: Standards and Advice Team

Standards and Advice Update

4. The Chair thanked the Standards and Advice Team for their work.

5. The Committee noted the report and the Standards and Advisory Manager highlighted the following aspects:

   - Three new members of the team recruited since the last meeting.
   - Complementary Alternatives Medicines enquiries continue following a recent march.
   - The issue of lay darters which may come before the Committee for consideration.

Matters for decision

Informed consent (case studies)

6. The Standards and Advisory Manager introduced the paper and highlighted the background: at its meeting in September 2017 the Standards Committee noted a number of recurring consent-related themes giving rise to concerns being raised about veterinary professionals which were reaching the Preliminary Investigation Committee.

7. In addition to updating Chapter 11 of the Supporting Guidance to the Code, the Committee requested that a number of case studies were prepared which could be disseminated to the profession in order to further explain and contextualise the need to obtain and record informed consent from a client.

8. The Standards and Advisory Manager also reported that the RCVS Knowledge have expressed an interest in working with the Standards and Advice team in order to disseminate guidance on informed consent. The Knowledge are currently testing a new website feature which may assist such dissemination.
9. Regarding the amended informed consent guidance (Supporting Guidance Chapter 11), which went live on the RCVS website in March, the following amendments were suggested:

- At paragraph 11.11: “A copy of the form should be provided to the person signing the form” should be bolded.
- At paragraph 11.14: “sufficient time” should be bolded.

**Action: Standards and Advice Team**

10. The Committee suggested that it would be useful if consent forms included a tick box prompt for veterinary surgeons relating to paragraph 11.2(e), such as “have I explained the tentative diagnosis to the client?”

11. There was discussion about paragraph 11.16. It was raised that when a client comes into practice in an emergency they may be in distress with the circumstances undermining their ability to take in what is being said. It was pointed out that veterinary surgeons are not qualified to determine mental capacity. It was suggested that in order to help the profession to deal with situations such as these, this and the broader topic of mental capacity would make an interesting case study.

**Action: Standards and Advice Team**

12. It was raised that there is lack of continuity relating to the need for consent forms; paragraph 11.6 suggests that consent forms are optional, however, within chapter 4, paragraph 4.17 it is stated that “consent should be obtained in writing” for use of veterinary medicines in accordance with the prescribing cascade. The Committee questioned whether the inconsistency relates to a Practice Standards Scheme requirement for consent forms, or whether it was a requirement of the Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2013. The Registrar agreed to research the answer to these questions and feedback to the Committee.

**Action: Registrar**

13. The Committee was content with the range of case studies and suggested the following amendments:

- Regarding case study 1, the phrase “damage and cavities” would not be typical language for practice. It was suggested that this phrase be removed.

- Regarding case study 2, it was suggested that the GDV be replaced with a bladder stone as this would make more clinical sense.

- Regarding case study 6, the advice states “destroyed without delay”, it was suggested that this is old language and should be replaced with more contemporary phrasing.

**Action: Standards and Advice team**

- All case studies require further veterinary review to ensure the language used is appropriate. As the Committee are largely practising veterinary surgeons they are willing to review the case studies from a clinical standpoint via email.

**Action: Practising members of the Standards Committee**
14. The Committee asked whether there had been consultation with the VCMS or VDS about the case studies. The Registrar reported that this has not been considered at this stage as the focus is internally within the College currently. However, we are open to this in the future and will notify them of the proposed studies before publishing.

GDPR
15. The Standards and Advisory Manager introduced the paper, and informed the Committee that since the information sheet and FAQs were added to the RCVS website there has been a reduction in advice queries relating to GDPR.

16. It was also reported that the supporting guidance has been reviewed externally. The proposed amendments to the supporting guidance with ‘tracked changes’ will be published on the RCVS website as soon as possible in order for the profession to clearly see the changes. When the GDPR comes into force on May 25 2018 the supporting guidance will be amended accordingly.

17. The following amendment to the guidance was highlighted in particular:
   - Chapter 5, paragraph 5: The last sentence of this paragraph relates to transfer animal data with redacted client details, therefore outside the scope of the GDPR. The Committee were asked whether this was considered feasible in practice. It was discussed that this could be feasible as the superseding practice would be likely to know the client details already, and can therefore request the records for a specific animal, for example, a 2 year old boxer dog. The superseding practice can then match these to the client via the microchip number.

18. There was a discussion around the current system of implied consent, and it was clarified that under the GDPR implied consent is not sufficient and the transferring vet has to reassure themselves that there is explicit client consent.

19. The Committee asked whether explicit consent can be obtained from the terms and conditions that a client agrees to when registered at a practice? The Registrar stated that this would be sufficient, as long as there was positive consent and it was specific. The RCVS could provide wording for this.

20. The Committee requested that advice queries be monitored for GDPR themes in order to have further discussion on guidance needed in 6 months.

   **Action: Standards and Advice team**

Confidential matters for decision

**Telemedicine**

21. 

22.

23.

24.

25.

26.
Matters for report

DC report
34. The Committee noted that a variety of sanctions had been used in recent cases. It was suggested that this approach appeared sensible and proportionate decisions had been made. There was a request for clarification of why the decision to sanction one veterinary surgeon had been postponed for 6 months. The Registrar explained that this was in order for the veterinary surgeon in question to be able to demonstrate her compliance with voluntary undertakings.

Riding Establishments Sub-committee Report
35. There were no comments and the report was noted.

Practice Standards Scheme Report
36. Ms Grannell provided an oral update to the Committee. She confirmed that there are 3,332 practice premises now part of the PSS Scheme. Small Animal still represents the biggest category, followed by farm, and then equine, in total representing just over 61.5% of all eligible practice premises. The most frequently achieved awards are Client Service, followed by Emergency and Critical Care and In-patient service. The next awards will be held in November at the London Vet Show.

37. Regional Question Time was held in Bristol on 19 April with 45 minutes surgeries by a PSS Assessor. These informal events provide an opportunity for members of the veterinary team to talk with senior PSS and RCVS staff about issues in the Scheme. It was noted that this event was so popular that a further day had to be added to accommodate those wishing an appointment.

38. The annual update to all modules has been carried out based on the changes agreed by the PSG. The updated guidance include GDPR, ionising regulation requirements, and employee rest and food prep areas.

39. At the end of February, the Lead Assessor and Senior Manager of PSS had a teleconference with an external provider of courses on the possibility of establishing a ‘qualification’ for PSS Assessors. Work is continuing on the feasibility of this.

40. The Committee asked whether further consideration has been given to making the scheme compulsory. It was noted that this would require legislation to provide for a right of entry to premises. The College’s messaging to date has been neutral re PSS and non-PSS practices. It
was noted that changing this messaging to encourage further participation could be considered first but only once a critical mass of practice premises were members of the scheme.

41. The next PSG meeting will be May 15 2018. Matters to be considered include the addition a new Mental Health and Wellbeing award and new Veterinary Specialist Hospital award. The British College of Veterinary Specialists will present a paper to aid discussions on establishing a Veterinary Specialist Hospital award, and the Education team will present a paper on accreditation of training practices.

Confidential matters for report

Certification Sub-committee Report
42.

Recognised Veterinary Practice Sub-committee Report
43.

Ethics Review Panel Report
44.

Any other business

45. It was noted that the makeup of the Committee would be impacted by the upcoming enactment of the Legislative Reform Order and current review of RCVS governance and committee structures.

Date of next meeting

46. The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Wednesday, 26 September 2018 at 10am.
Veterinary Nurses Council
Minutes of the meeting held on 1 May 2018

Members:
- Mrs Victoria Aspinall
- Mrs Lucy Bellwood
- Miss Alison Carr
- Dr Niall Connell
- Mrs Elizabeth Cox - Chair
- Mr Dominic Dyer
- Mrs Susan Howarth
- Mrs Andrea Jeffery
- Miss Racheal Marshall - Vice-Chair
- Miss Hilary Orpet
- Professor Susan Proctor
- Mr Matthew Rendle
- Miss Amber Richards

In attendance:
- Mrs Annette Amato - Committee Secretary
- Mr Luke Bishop - Senior Communications Officer
- Mrs Julie Dugmore - Director of Veterinary Nursing
- Ms Anna Feeney - Communications Officer
- Ms Naila Hassalani - Senior Education Officer
- Mrs Victoria Hedges - Examinations Manager
- Mrs Lily Lipman - Qualifications Manager
- Ms Lizzie Lockett - Chief Executive
- Dr Greer Wild - Policy and Public Affairs Officer
- Ms Michad Wildman - VN Pre-Registration Assessment Officer

Apologies for absence
1. There were no apologies for absence.

Declarations of interest
2. There were no new declarations of interest.

Minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2018
3. The Minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2018 were accepted as a correct record.

Matters arising

4. **European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) visitation.** The Qualifications Manager reported that the ENQA accreditation visit to the RCVS took place over three days in mid-April, and thanked all those who had taken part. The outcome would be known in September. The visiting panel had provided some useful initial feedback on the RCVS accreditation visitations processes for both veterinary surgeon and veterinary nursing programmes. In respect of veterinary nursing, the RCVS would be looking to expand the visitor pool and to undertake more proactive planning. The RCVS had also been recommended to increase the student representation on Committees within the RCVS, as a major stakeholder group. Further details and the outcome of the visit will be available at the next meeting.

5. In response to queries on increasing the VN visitor pool, it was confirmed that colleges had already been approached the previous year, and it was noted that the VN Education Committee (VNEC) had recently approved two new visitors, one for further education (FE) visits and one for all visits. It was also confirmed that a leaflet was in preparation by the Communications department and this should be available in the next couple of weeks. It was commented that in order to attract potential visitors, this should be issued before the end of college terms, and in time for applications to be considered at the July meeting of the VNEC.

Update on operational matters

6. The CEO provided an update on a number of recent operational activities.

7. **ENQA visit.** The CEO echoed the thanks of the Qualifications Manager to those members of VN Council and others who had attended to support the visit, and also particularly thanked those members of staff who had organised the visit and prepared the documentation. She added that it had been an interesting and helpful experience to be the recipients of an accreditation visit and much had been learnt from this.

8. **Legislative Reform Order (LRO).** The LRO was due to be debated in the House of Lords that afternoon, and a vote was expected in the early evening. This would be a key milestone in the future governance of the professions. The impact for VN Council of a successful vote would be the inclusion of two VN Council members on RCVS Council for the first time.

9. **Communications developments.** DEFRA had provided a budget towards the promotion of careers (although primarily in government) for veterinary surgeons. This would catalyse the redevelopment of the broader Walks of Life careers materials, which would include veterinary nursing careers. The leadership MOOC (massive open online course), aimed at veterinary nurses and veterinary surgeons, was launched at the recent British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) Congress and would go live in the autumn, and so far thirty one nurses had signed up to participate. Any members wishing to be involved in the pilot were asked to notify Anthony Roberts, the Director of Leadership and Innovation. A new member of staff
was in the process of being recruited to assist with this project.

10. **Mind Matters.** A new staff member had been recruited to assist with the Mind Matters project. The CEO stressed that all activities are open to veterinary nurses and veterinary surgeons.

**PSP exemption policy**

11. The Examinations Manager presented a revised paper outlining a proposal to exempt some nurses from the Period of Supervised Practice (PSP), based on the paper which was discussed at the October 2017 meeting of Council. Council had been broadly in support of the proposals but had requested further details. The revised proposal took into account comments made during discussion and following the meeting. Examples were also provided of the circumstances which might lead an applicant to apply for exemption.

12. The purpose of the current PSP is to provide an opportunity for those who have taken a significant break from the register (more than five years) to refresh their skills before re-joining the register. However, some nurses remove themselves from the register while working as a veterinary nurse outside the UK, as being on the UK register is not a requirement. They are therefore less likely to need to update their knowledge and skills or re-gain their confidence prior to re-joining the RCVS register.

13. It was reiterated that this situation should only occur for veterinary nurses who had not been registered due to working overseas, as in order to practise as a veterinary nurse in the UK, veterinary nurses must be on the RCVS VN register.

14. The amended proposal was that applicants applying to re-join the register will be considered for exemption from the PSP if they can provide substantial evidence that their nursing experience while off the register is similar to that expected in the UK. Applicants will be expected to have been employed as a veterinary nurse involving some clinical aspects of a nurse’s role for a minimum of two out of the previous five years, and the standard of nursing outlined in the application will need to be of a similar standard expected in the UK. Applicants would be required to produce a portfolio of evidence including details of CPD. Full details of the proposed application form and guidance notes were provided.

15. A concern was expressed that although an applicant’s clinical skills may not need updating, they may have become out of touch with UK regulations. The CEO commented that she had been considering developing an online training suite of small modules, which may tie in with this in the future. The Examinations Manager added that she currently holds monthly registration talks for all newly registered veterinary nurses who have trained overseas, and this could be expanded to include returning RVNs.

16. There was some discussion as to the most appropriate person or group to consider the applications, bearing in mind that the numbers would be low and there may be considerable variation between applications, although all applicants would be guided by the criteria and use the standard formats for the submission of documentation. It was suggested that
Initially, a small working group of VNC representatives should review the applications and report back to Council. It was suggested that this might be a role for one of the sub-committees reporting to VN Education Committee.

17. Council agreed the proposed application forms and guidance notes, and that this should be viewed as a pilot, to be reviewed after a year.

VN Education Committee (VNEC)

18. Mrs Jeffery presented the report of the meeting of the Education Committee held on 26 March 2018 and drew Council’s attention to a few points in the report.

19. **Student handbook.** Work on formatting the student handbook is ongoing, and the handbook should be ready for the cohorts of students enrolling in the autumn.

20. **Apprenticeship End Point Assessment (EPA).** The Director of Veterinary Nursing provided an update on developments since the meeting of the VNEC. The employer group had now agreed on the format of the EPA, and as this did not differ from the version which had been circulated to and approved by the VNEC earlier in the year, this had now been submitted to the Institute for Apprenticeships, along with the estimated costings, for approval.

21. **Risk Rules.** The Committee had approved a new Awarding Organisation (AO) and Higher Education Institution (HEI) Accreditations and Quality Schedule, which would provide a tailored schedule of activity for each institution, to be adjusted as required in accordance with any changes in the risk profile. The proposals for new risk categories and subsequent additional auditing activity would also be referred to the Audit and Risk Committee for advice and guidance.

22. **HND provision in Scotland.** The RCVS has received official notification that Scotland’s Rural University College (SRUC) will cease provision of the HND Veterinary Nursing programme currently run through the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and will be developing a full BSc licence to practise programme, accredited by the University of Glasgow, to supersede it. The Committee would be considering the accreditation report at its July meeting.

23. **City & Guilds.** The Committee had received a presentation from City & Guilds on the proposed future direction of development for the Level 3 Diploma in veterinary nursing, to tie in with the new apprenticeship trailblazer scheme. In view of the proposed scale of developments, the Committee had agreed to an extension of the accreditation period to 2019, to tie in with these developments, on the condition that the current outstanding actions in respect of the OSCE and other examination issues are addressed.

24. **Training Practice (TP) numbers.** The Committee had been pleased to note that there had been an overall increase of over 220 TPs in the last twelve months.
25. **Publication of VN textbooks.** The Committee had been concerned to learn that two major publishers of veterinary nursing textbooks had indicated that they were unlikely to be continuing with VN publications in the future. The Director of Veterinary Nursing intended to make contact with other potential publishers.

26. **Registration applications.** In response to a query on the expected timescale for processing new registrations with the new online application process, it was confirmed that the new system had not yet been trialled, but further information on turnaround times should be available after the trial period. In the meantime, an additional member of staff had been employed to clear the outstanding applications in time for the introduction of the new system. Details of the new system would be widely publicised before its introduction.

27. Council confirmed its approval of the Minutes of the VNEC held on 26 March 2018.

**International Qualifications**

28. **Annual update report.** The Examinations Manager presented the annual report summarising the applications for registration from nurses trained outside the UK, covering the period between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018. There had been a decrease in the number of completed applications received (97 in total), compared with 119 the previous year, with a significant drop in the number of applications from veterinary nurses trained in the Republic of Ireland, although the reason for this was not known. There had been a slight increase in applications from veterinary nurses trained in Australia, New Zealand and Belgium. A further 20 applications submitted during that time period had not yet been completed.

29. It was noted that the RCVS does not currently require an IELTS (International English Language Testing System) certificate from any applicants, but there is a provision to be able to refer an applicant to the Registrar if there is concern regarding their communication abilities. One recent applicant had successfully achieved all elements of the pre-registration examination except that all examiners had expressed concern that the applicant should not be permitted to register until they had passed a communications examination.

30. In subsequent discussion, a query was raised as to whether an IELTS certificate should be introduced as a requirement. However, it was confirmed that under EU legislation, such a requirement cannot be imposed, and Council had decided in the past not to require an English language examination for any applicants. It was reiterated that where there are concerns on an applicant’s English communication skills, these are referred to the Registrar, and it was felt that there are sufficient opportunities to identify poor command of spoken English during the application process.

31. It was reported that twelve applicants had included information on their applications which showed that they had undertaken Schedule 3 procedures which they were not legally permitted to perform. In all these cases, the applicant has been required to complete an assignment covering the role of the veterinary team and UK legislation before being permitted to register. The employer has also been spoken to in each case.
32. Two applications have been rejected as the qualifications being put forward were deemed to be equivalent to that of an animal care assistant rather than a veterinary nurse.

33. Current and recent projects. In October 2017, a webinar was presented which outlined the processes to be undertaken by veterinary nurses trained outside the UK before applying to enter the register. There had been over 100 registrants for the webinar.

34. There have been three examination familiarisation days for applicants who are required to undertake the pre-registration OSCE. These are not intended to teach, but to allow applicants to familiarise themselves with the OSCE set up and equipment. The majority of applicants who attended these events have been successful in the exam.

35. Independent Vet Care (IVC), in conjunction with Plumpton College, has designed a programme of study to prepare nurses trained outside the UK for working in the UK, the intention being that successful candidates would be employed by IVC. A pre-registration examination, tied in with the course completion date, was to be delivered by the RCVS and paid for by IVC. A trial examination had been held the previous week with three candidates, although it was intended that the numbers would be greater in the future.

36. Consideration of certain applications without submission of course content. Council was asked to consider removing the requirement to submit details of the course content for veterinary technicians achieving the BSc Science with extended major in Veterinary Technology, awarded by the University of Queensland Australia. This would follow the process which has been accepted on several occasions in the past where a large number of applicants with the same qualification from one country have had the course content cross mapped to the Day One Skills and the Day One Competences, and the course has closely mapped to that undertaken in the UK.

37. During the last three years there have been six applications from veterinary nurses who have achieved the Queensland qualification. The RCVS equivalency officer has agreed that all six applications have met the required standard, and the applicants have been permitted to proceed to the pre-registration examination. Three have sat the examination and one passed first time.

38. In response to queries, it was confirmed that several qualifications have been exempted in the past, after agreement by VN Council, and it was reiterated that this exemption was not from the requirement to sit the pre-registration examination but to submit the course content mapped to the Day One Skills, which would have previously been submitted by other applicants who had achieved the same qualification and the applicants permitted to proceed to sit the pre-registration examination. All applications from such schools would continue to be monitored and if there were any changes, the course content would need to be resubmitted.

39. It was also confirmed that the RCVS does not carry out a quality assurance exercise on these overseas qualifications. The qualifications are cross mapped against the RCVS Day
One Skills and Day One Competences and candidates are always required to sit an examination.

40. In response to a concern that the onus would be on the RCVS to identify when a course has changed, the Examinations Manager reassured Council that the overseas qualifications are coded, and it would therefore be clear from the documentation submitted whether the same qualification was being submitted.

41. Other points noted in response to queries were that not all EU schools are ACOVENE accredited. Applicants from outside the EU/EEA are assessed on a case by case basis and if the training time is significantly less than that required of UK nurses, a period of adaptation equal to the deficient training time must also be completed.

42. At the conclusion of the discussion, it was agreed that the applicants with the BSc Science with extended major in Veterinary Technology, awarded by the University of Queensland Australia should be exempted from the requirement to submit details of their course content. All applicants would be required to sit the pre-registration examination.

**CPD Audit**

43. Council noted the report and analysis of the 2017 audit of veterinary nurses’ CPD which had also been presented to the VN Education Committee in March. It was commented that the detailed breakdown of CPD activities was very interesting, but there seemed to be some confusion about what can or cannot be counted as CPD. Although the overall response rate had been good, there had also been an increase in the number of non-compliances.

44. It was noted that 8% of nurses had not responded to any communication from the RCVS regarding their CPD, and it was confirmed that the first course of action in such cases was to call the records in again at the next audit. The CPD working group deals, among other issues, with the procedure for non-compliant VNs and veterinary surgeons.

**CPD Pilot**

45. The Senior Education Officer reported that following discussion at the RCVS Education Committee in February on the timescale for the pilot project, Education Committee had agreed that extending the pilot, potentially to large groups of practices and through SPVS to independent vets, would be beneficial and that a longer timeframe would be necessary than had originally been envisaged. It was also agreed that the IT infrastructure was key to the success of this initiative: there had been positive feedback on the ‘app’ at the workshop and the additional time would be useful to ensure that user-friendly IT support, including functions such as voice recording, was available. It had also been agreed to publish the project timelines, so that the end-point of this project is clear to the professions.

**Reports from RCVS Committees**

**Standards Committee**
Miss Marshall provided a brief update on matters discussed at the meeting of the Standards Committee the previous week.

**Informed consent.** The revised information within the supporting guidance on informed consent, reported at the previous meeting, had gone live on the website in March 2018 following approval by RCVS Council. The Committee had also requested and reviewed a number of case studies to be disseminated to the profession to further explain and contextualise the need to obtain informed consent from a client. It was hoped that following final checks, these would soon be available to be published online. In response to a query, it was confirmed that communication on informed consent would be included in a press release and *RCVS E-news* and would also be included in the next edition of *VN Education*.

**Telemedicine.** The Standards Committee had again considered the issue of the use of vet-to-client telemedicine, and had recommended that the current Supporting Guidance should be amended to make clearer what is now permissible in terms of offering advice remotely. The Committee had also agreed to undertake further work to develop a framework to mitigate risk, before making further recommendation to Council as to whether further amendments should be made to the interpretation of Under Care.

**GDPR.** In preparation for the introduction of the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements, an information document containing practical scenario based questions and answers was produced and is now available on the Advice and Guidance section of the website. The Committee was also provided with proposed amendments to the Code and supplementary guidance, and these amendments, with tracked changes, will be published on the RCVS website in advance of the GDPR implementation on 25 May 2018, followed by formal amendment of the supporting guidance upon implementation of the GDPR.

**Registered Veterinary Nurse Preliminary Investigation Committee (RVN PIC)**

Council received and noted the report on the work of the RVN PIC since its last meeting.

**VN Disciplinary Committee**

Council noted the report of the Disciplinary hearing held on 26 and 27 March 2018, full details of which had been reported on the RCVS website.

**VN Futures**

The Chair provided an update on the various activities of the different development groups created by the VN Futures Action Group over the past few months.

There had been a VN Futures stream at BSAVA Congress in April with various activities including a session on careers and on Blue Sky thinking. The sessions were very well attended and the Chairs of the development groups will continue to provide updates. On 3
May there would be a roadshow in Derby, covering flexible working.

Communications report

54. The Senior Communications Officer reported on a number of recent and forthcoming activities.

55. **Events**. RCVS activity at the BSAVA Congress in April had included a very successful launch of the leadership programme, with many veterinary nurses and veterinary surgeons signing up for the leadership course. The VN Futures stream had also been well attended, as had the sessions on mental health and wellbeing.

56. The RCVS would have a stand for the first time at the Devon County Show in May and at the Royal Welsh Show in July; both these events being public facing would have their main focus on careers information and the Practice Standards Scheme. RCVS would also be present at VetFest in Guildford in June; this would focus on mental health, leadership and other matters affecting the professions.

57. **Publications**. *RCVS E-News* had been issued to all veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses at the end of April. The next edition of the *VN Education* newsletter would be published in June, December, and was available online in the publications area of the website. The plan for the future was to launch *RCVS News* as an online only publication.

58. **Web and online communications**. In April there was the launch of a joint social media campaign with the BVA - #petsneedvets, which promotes the advantages of signing up to a veterinary practice. The Communications Department and several Council members had also attended a careers event “Vets: Stay Go Diversity” which had been very successful and it was hoped would be repeated. There had also been regular well attended webinars on a variety of topics, and the development of several podcasts. A number of online interviews would be held with the veterinary nurse members of the staff – the Director of Veterinary Nursing, Examinations Manager and Qualifications Manager, as part of VN Awareness month, on their careers outside clinical practice.

59. **Website**. Developments were under way to improve the design and structure of the My Account area of the website, and the creation of a CPD account area for those on the CPD Pilot programme.

VN Council Membership

60. The Chair reported that the new VN Council structure would be implemented at the AGM on 13 July, and that the advertisement had been placed for the two new appointed RVNs. The recruitment was being handled by an external recruitment agency, and there would be a separate interview panel.

61. The Chair then thanked the two members of Council who would be retiring in July, Amber Richards and Hilary Orpet. Amber Richards has been an elected member of VN Council
since 2014, and has represented VN Council on the Practice Standards Group since 2015.

62. Hilary Orpet has been an elected member of VN Council since 2006, and has represented Council on the Awarding Body Board and the Veterinary Surgeons Act Working Party, and chaired the VN Legislation Working Party. Hilary is also a member of the VN Education Committee and served on the VN Day One Skills Working Party. She is currently a member of the VN Futures Schools Council Working Party. Council acknowledged Hilary’s significant contribution to its discussions throughout her twelve years as a member.

Date of next meeting

63. The next meeting of Council would be held on Tuesday 2 October 2018 at 10.30am.

Items discussed in confidential session

Practice Standards report

64. Council noted a paper from the Practice Standards Manager containing an update on the Practice Standards Scheme which continues to grow, with now 61.5% of all eligible practice premises now part of the Scheme.

65. The Director of Veterinary Nursing provided a brief oral update on internal meetings held to discuss the further development of a potential assessor training programme. The Chair confirmed that she would attend the next meeting of the Practice Standards Group on 15 May to represent VN Council.

Golden Jubilee Award

66. Council reviewed the current criteria for the Golden Jubilee Awards, together with information on RCVS Awards available to veterinary nurses, and other awards in the industry. There was a general discussion on the future of the award, to be continued at a later date.

Election of Chair and Vice-Chairs for 2018/2019

67. Council had been provided with the details of the nominations for the Chair and two Vice-Chairs for 2018/2019, in accordance with the election procedures, and agreed unanimously that Miss Racheal Marshall should be elected as Chair for the coming year. Mrs Elizabeth Cox and Mr Matthew Rendle were elected as the two Vice-Chairs.
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Minutes of the Preliminary Investigation Committee / Disciplinary Committee Liaison Committee meeting held on Thursday, 12 April 2018

Members:  
- Mr R A Ash* Chair, PIC  
- Mr C T Barker Member of Council  
- Ms A K Boag Member of Council / Junior Vice-President (Chair)  
- Mrs S K Edwards* Chair, RVN PIC  
- Mr I R Green Chair, DC  
- Dr K A Richards Chair, SC  
- Dr C P Sturgess Members of Council / Treasurer

In attendance:  
- Ms E C Ferguson Registrar / Director of Legal Services  
- Ms L Lockett CEO  
- Miss C Newbold Clerk to DC  
- Mrs V Soames Head of Professional Conduct  
- Mrs D Wiggins Secretary

Apologies for absence

1. Apologies for absence were received from Mr Ash and Mrs Edwards.

Declarations of interest

2. There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 12 October 2017

3. The minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting. Noting the action points:

   - paragraph 14: complete. The President had had dinner with Mr Pittaway. In addition it was noted that the Chair, Disciplinary Committee (DC), had emailed him to thank him on behalf of all DC members;

   - paragraph 21: complete. The Alternative Disputes Resolution (ADR) was now a standing item on the agenda;

   - paragraph 36: complete. The appraisal process for DC members would be reported under the DC report, but it was noted that the process had been changed and was working well;
- paragraph 43: on-going. Case studies, including around informed consent, were a work in progress and would be going back to Standards Committee (SC) at its April 2018 meeting.

Updates – General / matters of interest

4. The Registrar brought the following items to the Committee’s attention:

(Disciplinary) Legislative Reform Order (LRO) review (tabled paper)

5. The tabled paper was the draft review of the 2013 (disciplinary) LRO. This review must be undertaken by the Secretary of State for Defra five years after its inception. The review requires completion by 1 July and the College had duly provided the information requested by Defra by April 2018 as promised in the form of the template supplied via the Better Regulation Department of Defra. It was noted that the review would have to be finalised before the next PIC / DC LC meeting, and Committee was to give any comments / amendments on the draft to the Registrar as soon as possible. It was agreed that once Defra had considered, the finalised document would be circulated to the Committee.

   Action: Committee / Registrar

6. It was questioned whether the College was going to inform the profession this had been done? It was noted that whilst it would be good to report on the changes made and the impacts as a result, it was stressed that this was a Defra review, and it was likely that they would upload the report to their website.

7. It was noted that the number of Council members knowing exactly what the Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) work entailed would lessen as time went by so it was imperative to make sure the knowledge was passed on. It was suggested that information about PIC / DC work, processes and procedures, should be part of the induction process for new Council members. It was commented that the whole profession should be aware of the process, not just Council members.

‘Overseas’ vets

8. Standards Committee had questioned the number of cases before DC that related to ‘overseas’ vets. Before this could be considered, it was questioned what was meant by ‘overseas’ – was it a non-UK national; a non-UK national graduating from a UK school; or a UK national from non-UK school. It was noted that non-UK nationals on the RCVS Register of Members constituted approximately 35% of the membership so that a similar percentage at DC might be expected. Of the 7 hearings in 2015/2016 there were 2 non-UK nationals and 3 non-UK graduates (i.e. approximately 42%). There was a higher percentage in 2017: of the 16 cases, 10 were non-UK nationals but, when looking into this deeper, a number had graduated from UK vet schools. It was also noted that a significant number of those DC hearings related to convictions / dishonesty relating to non-disclosure of convictions where the decision to refer to DC was relatively clear cut and would apply irrespective of nationality. So far in 2018 there had been 9 cases, 7 of which were UK nationals so it was impossible to ascertain any trends or patterns.
9. It was agreed that the matter should be kept under review and relevant data collected. It was agreed the Registrar and Chair would discuss further to decide the data to be included for a report to Liaison Committee annually at its April meeting.

**Action: Registrar / Ms Boag / DC Clerk / Secretary**

10. It was noted that PIC had their annual training the following week when a session was to be held specifically on unconscious bias. It was intended that similar training would be rolled out to staff and Council members also.

**Action: Registrar**

**Resignation of lay member of PIC**

11. It was reported that Penny Howe had been made up to Queen’s Counsel and was heavily in demand. As a result she had taken the decision to resign from PIC. Committee asked for their thanks and congratulations to be passed on. It was noted that Kenneth Caley, a reserve member, was attending annual PIC training on 24 April and sitting in on a forthcoming PIC meeting as an observer before starting in his new role on PIC in May.

**Action: Registrar**

**Standard of Proof for DC cases**

12. It was noted that the Legislation Working Party (LWP) would consider the ‘standard of proof’ under which disciplinary cases should be determined. This was against a background of the RCVS being one of very few regulators (and none in the health sector) still operating to the criminal standard.

**Health and Performance Protocols**

13. It was reported that there were approximately 10 people currently on the Health Protocol, and that the sub-group was still working well.

**Monitoring / performance / working methods / outcomes / dashboard**

14. The Head of Professional Conduct (HoPC) highlighted the following items:

- the increase in enquiries had seen a corresponding decrease in the number of concerns registered, both were as a result of the introduction of the Veterinary Client Mediation Service (VCMS) and the RCVS’ triage processes. To ensure that the cases that should be coming to the RCVS were doing so and were not being deflected under the triage process, the Registrar / HoPC would undertake random sampling of the enquiries submitted. This was in parallel to a similar audit carried out by RCVS of VCMS cases;

- credit should be given to the ProfCon team as Stage 1 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for March 2018 had reached 93% (first table, paragraph 11 of the paper). The Committee was pleased to note this figure;
- progress was being made to bring down the length of time for complex cases to be decided at Stage 2, PIC.

15. The issue of expert witnesses was discussed. It was questioned whether there were sufficient people to act as experts to bring cases to the statutory disciplinary committees in a timely manner. It was noted that there was not a ‘pool’ of experts; as such it was generally registered members in practice giving their time, so cases would fit in around their other obligations. Also, whilst happy to ‘give back’ to the profession, members would sometimes not want to be seen to be PIC / RCVS’s ‘person’ so there were limitations on the ability to build up DC hearing experience. The adversarial nature of hearings could also be daunting. It was noted that this could feature challenging and exhaustive cross-examination where individuals might feel undermined professionally if, ultimately, the outcome was not in line with their opinions.

16. How well people were prepared for DC hearings was also considered and that while assistance in format was given, it was vital to ensure at all times that the views expressed were those of the expert. It was agreed that examples of how to write ‘good’ and ‘bad’ reports could be provided when experts first agree to help the College, and support given generally.

Action: HoPC / DC Clerk / DC #

17. It was noted that the solicitors working on the DC hearings were incredibly busy and the HoPC should inform the Registrar if this becomes an issue.

18. It was agreed that the number of DC hearing days (not just the number of cases) would be included in the update, as well as a comparison to the number of hearing days listed.

Action: HoPC / DC Clerk

19. It was further noted that the Case Management team had again seen changes in members of staff and this had been noted within the profession and raised in social media. There were a variety of reasons for the changes including personal circumstances and a natural progression with experience gained. Remuneration was also a factor, and there had been a review of salaries to ensure the RCVS remained competitive within the market. Support for staff was given in a variety of ways and included Mind Matters training and there was conflict management training scheduled in May 2018.

20. As it had been a couple of years since the current KPIs were set, it was agreed they would be reviewed at the July Liaison Committee meeting.

Action: HoPC / Secretary

Alternative Disputes Resolution (ADR) – update

21. The Registrar outlined the paper (as well as a tabled paper relating to the recent quarter) that included feedback since the system had been formally continued. Numbers giving feedback were still relatively low but it was pleasing to note that:
- practice feedback for understanding their concerns was +9%;

- there were increased percentages from clients and practices on satisfaction of the outcome (+11% and +8% respectively); and

- that both parties would recommend VCMS to others had also increased to 88% (+8% clients) and 86% (+1% practices) respectively.

22. The high volume of cases was noted, particularly that the rate of c. 131 enquiries per month would equate to over 1,500 per annum, which fell into the higher cost bracket. Enquiries were expected to remain at that level over the year, but as the number of concerns registered were slightly lower, this may be the ‘trade off’.

23. It was noted that while a lot of concerns had been returned to veterinary practices in the first instance, they were not coming back into the system so it was assumed that the veterinary practices were dealing with them and / or that the listening and explanatory process had been sufficient. There would be a quality assurance review in year 1 to measure the mediation process so the College, over and above the audit, could ensure cases were being triaged and referred as appropriate to the RCVS.

24. The CEO suggested that there should be a College ‘blog’ around VCMS and the KPIs and how they fit together, as well as where we had got to. This was agreed.

   **Action: Registrar / HoPC / Director of Communications**

25. The Committee agreed that the regular updates of data should be refined to highlights only now that the initial information / feedback had been received.

   **Action: DC Clerk**

**Loss of earnings for disciplinary hearings cancelled or postponed at short notice**

26. The Chair outlined the paper and stated that there was a clear schedule of remuneration for DC hearings that were cancelled in advance but it was currently discretionary if a hearing ‘went short’ during the hearing itself. Liaison Committee needed to make a decision whether to leave it as discretionary or whether to bring in a formal schedule.

27. The Chair, DC, stated that in his personal view how the discretion was applied in the latest extended case was appropriate, however, some members were dissatisfied and this was forcefully expressed. It was stressed that if there was clarity at the beginning of any hearing members would then be able to decide whether they would sit on a case or not. It was noted that the vast majority of cases were for one week and if it went short, payment would be 100%, it was when a case was scheduled for longer that was the issue. DC members had made their views clear in that they would like something definitive written down so they could plan accordingly.
28. It was questioned who decided how long a case would run for? This was a combination of RCVS staff, external solicitors, the sitting Chair for the hearing, and the respondent and their team. It was further questioned what would happen if there were not enough people to sit on a case? Fortunately, this had not been an issue so far, it was often more difficult to get people for a short case of, say, two days.

29. The Committee considered the scale of payment for other regulators and what it considered was fair and reasonable, and agreed the following remuneration / loss of earnings for hearings that went short during sitting:

- current arrangements where a hearing was cancelled before it had started should remain unchanged:
  - 0 – 3 days notice 100%
  - 4 – 7 days notice 75%
  - 8 – 14 days notice 50%

- for hearings of up to 5 days where the hearing had already begun but then ran short, it was considered that the current arrangement of payment of 100% would remain;

- for hearings of more than 5 days that ran short where the hearing had begun (for that period after 5 days referred to above) payment would be made for:
  - during hearing 1-2 days 100%
  - up to a maximum of 5 days thereafter 50%

30. It was further agreed that:

- days ‘counted’ pre-hearing would be for the ‘working’ week only and would not take weekends or public holidays into account;

- if DC members had concerns from a particular hearing they should:
  - make first contact with the DC Chair;
  - if unresolved this could be escalated to the Registrar;
  - if still unresolved this could be escalated to PIC DC Liaison Committee.

31. The Chair, DC, and Registrar would draft the proposed schedule and forward to DC members.

  Action: DC # / Registrar

Open Minds Consulting – draft report

32. The Registrar highlighted that this was the long awaited report which formed part of the work the RCVS had undertaken around blame culture; one particular section related to the handling of
concerns process, and how it affected the mental health of people going through the process. It was noted that changes were already underway when the survey was undertaken and that when compounded with delays in issuing the report, it meant that some matters and subsequent recommendations appeared historic. Nonetheless, there were lessons to be learned and points raised that would be taken away. The Mind Matters Initiative (MMI) Taskforce had some thoughts on how to take points forward in a constructive way.

33. The CEO reported that the long delay was because of a series of issues with the agency tasked with compiling the report. There were on-going discussions around clarification of the data that had been used to underpin recommendations made. This was desirable before the report could be finalised. There had been a MMI Taskforce meeting at the recent BSAVA Congress and one suggestion was that instead of publication of the report per se, the MMI Taskforce should come up with a series of recommendations using the report as source material and focus on four or five points going forward, one for example:

- to explore a peer support system (question 15 of the survey): it would be inappropriate for the RCVS to carry this out, though it could potentially be through Vetlife, with RCVS funding support.

34. It was considered that if the report was not published this could be perceived as a lack of transparency (albeit even as a source material it would be available).

35. There was discussion around organising a seminar with other regulators that could be useful to ‘tease out’ common issues and learning.

36. The Committee agreed that the RCVS should publish the report as it stood but add context through the MMI Taskforce.

Action: Registrar / CEO

Disciplinary Committee report

37. The Chair, DC, outlined the report, highlighting:

- the Committee had been very busy;

- the new appraisal process was working well so far – it was a pilot this year and would be discussed at the DC annual training in November;

- an appeal had been lodged with the Privy Council Office but no date as yet had been set;

- it was noted that given the current number of hearings it was not always possible to have the Chair or a Vice-Chair to act as Chair of the hearing (there was currently one Chair and two Vice-Chairs) though a number of other committee members had experience of chairing similar panels in other regulators and could chair hearings as and when required. It was suggested
that in addition to the existing Chair and Vice-Chair roles, a further group of those eligible for chair hearings should be formalised with additional training as required;

**Action: DC# / Registrar**

- it was questioned if a hearing did not have the Chair or a Vice-Chair sitting, would that make the decision more vulnerable to challenge? This was not considered to be a problem as the members stepping up into the role were experienced members of the committee, frequently with Chair experience in other regulators.

38. The Committee noted the report.

**Feedback to Standards Committee v.v. Liaison Committee**

39. It was highlighted that PIC had recently considered a number of cases relating to ‘overnight care’, particularly concerning clarity of information to clients about what this meant in terms of supervision / staff members on duty. It was recognised that the Supplementary Guidance was clear, but it was suggested that additional case studies could be produced to assist – similar to a leaflet for ‘Top 10 Tips’ produced some years ago. The CEO stated that a leaflet had been produced when Dr Moore was President, and could be updated / improved as a communications exercise.

**Action: Registrar / HoPC/ PIC# / Standards & Advice Team / Comms Team**

**Any other business**

**Risk register, equality and diversity**

40. From discussions, it was noted that there could be a reputational risk regarding bias about recording nationalities/gender, etc., not just at DC and should be considered at a College-wide level i.e. recruitment or accreditation. Also, what policies to 3rd parties have i.e. Headhunters. It was noted that the College had already looked at the London Living Wage and sustainability – for items produced for congresses, etc., and that as a result this may increase the costs incurred.

**Date of next meeting**

41. The date of the next meeting is Thursday, 12 July 2018 at 10:00 am.

Dawn Wiggins
Secretary, PIC DC LC
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d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Council</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>14 June 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Preliminary Investigation Committee Chairman’s Report to Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classification</td>
<td>Unclassified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>This report describes the work of the Preliminary Investigation Committee since RCVS Council’s last meeting, including by reference to key stage indicators, and provides information about the nature of concerns being considered by the PIC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisions required</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attachments</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Preliminary Investigation Committee

Chairman’s Report to Council 14 June 2018

Introduction
1. Since the last Report to Council (which gave information as at 15 February 2018), there have been seven Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) meetings: 21 February, 7 March, 21 March, 11 April, 25 April, 9 May and 23 May. A further PIC meeting will take place on 6 June 2018.

Preliminary Investigation Committee
2. The total number of new cases considered by the Committee at the seven meetings referred to above is 44. Of the 44 new cases considered:
   - 22 were concluded at first consideration by the Committee. Of these,
     - 11 cases were closed with no further action
     - 8 cases were closed with advice issued to the veterinary surgeon
     - 3 cases were held open
   - 22 were referred for further investigation, including:
     - 11 cases which were referred for enquiries, visits and/or preliminary expert report
     - 8 cases which were referred to solicitors, for formal statements to be taken
     - 3 cases which were referred straight to a Disciplinary Committee.

No cases have been referred to the RCVS Health or Performance Protocols.

Ongoing Investigations
3. The PI Committee is investigating 30 ongoing cases where the Committee has requested statements, visits or preliminary expert reports for example. This figure does not include cases on the Health and Performance Protocols.

Health Protocol
4. There are five veterinary surgeons either under assessment or currently on the RCVS Health Protocol.

Performance Protocol
5. There is one veterinary surgeon currently on the RCVS Performance Protocol.

Professional Conduct Department

Enquiries and concerns
6. Before registering a concern with the RCVS, potential complainants must make an Enquiry (either in writing or by telephone), so that Case Managers can consider with the enquirer whether they should raise a formal concern or whether the matter would be more appropriately dealt with through the Veterinary Client Mediation Service.
7. In order to provide information covering as near as possible to a three month reporting period, figures are provided for 1 March to 29 May 2018. In this period,

- the number of matters registered as written Enquiries was 350, and
- the number of formal Concerns registered in the same period was 135\(^1\).

8. The table below shows the categories of matters registered between 1 March and 29 May 2018.

**Enquiries and concerns registered between 1 March and 29 May 2018**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description of Category</th>
<th>Number of Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Client Confidentiality</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Fees</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Promoting the Practice</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D/1</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D/2</td>
<td>24 hour emergency cover</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D/3</td>
<td>Euthanasia</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D/4</td>
<td>Communication/ Consent</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Running the business</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Treatment of animals by non-veterinary surgeon</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Certification</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>The use of Veterinary Medicine Products</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Jurisdiction of RCVS</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Negligence/Inadequate Care</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Other (for example, fraudulent registration)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Convictions</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Appeals</td>
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<td>P</td>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Restoration</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Unclassified</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>485</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Data source – Profcon computer system concerns data.
2. Category ‘X’ is a temporary field assigned to concerns files where a final category has not been identified, either because they are potential concerns or have not yet been assessed.

**Referral to Disciplinary Committee**

9. Since the last report to Council, the Committee has referred 8 cases to the Disciplinary Committee - 4 of these cases arose from convictions for criminal offences.

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\(^1\) We do not have the data to determine what proportion of formal Concerns originated as written Enquiries. Formal Concerns can also originate as telephone Enquiries.
Veterinary Investigators
10. The Veterinary Investigators and the Chief Investigator carried out 3 announced visits, 7 unannounced visits and assisted in 1 enforcement visit with other agencies in the reporting period. No health related or review visits were undertaken in the period.

Concerns procedure
11. The Case Manager team continues to work hard to achieve the stage 1 target that cases should be decided by the Case Examiner Group within 4 months of registration of complaint (the Stage 1 KPI). Since 1 March 2018, the median monthly percentage of cases achieving the Stage 1 KPI is 91%.

12. The Stage 2 KPI is for the PIC to reach a decision on the cases before it within the target time of 9 months. This KPI was met in 75% of cases before the PIC in the reporting period. It should be noted that where cases require more extensive investigation (for example, obtaining witness statements or preliminary expert reports), the time taken to reach a decision may exceed the 9 months, and the team are focusing on how that time can be reduced while maintain the quality and thoroughness of the investigation, so that appropriate decisions are reached.

Operational matters

Training
13. PIC members participated in a training day in April 2018, alongside members of RVN PIC, veterinary investigators and staff. The training included presentations from solicitors at Penningtons (the College’s legal representatives in disciplinary cases) on conflicts of interest and consideration of the public interest as part of the Committees’ decision making. Participants also received an update on the new Prof Con system, and a presentation on unconscious bias from an external training provider.

14. Training will take place again in Autumn 2018.

New lay member
15. We have been pleased to welcome a new lay member, Kenneth Caley, to the Committee; he replaces a lay member who stepped down because of external work commitments.

Common categories of concerns
16. The Committee continues to consider concerns on a wide variety of topics. The table at paragraph 8 above shows in broad terms the categories of enquiries and concerns, and numbers in each category, which have been registered in the period.

17. As referred to in previous reports, consent and communication continue to be a common cause for complaint, and Council members will be aware of the updated Supporting Guidance which gives more advice on effective communication with clients and obtaining informed consent.

18. Other matters which appear commonly to give rise to complaints are:
• dental treatments – there are often gaps between owners’ expectations (or understanding) of how many teeth will be extracted with the number actually extracted. This is a particular example of the communication and consent issue mentioned above.

• overnight care – again an example of the communication issue, with gaps in understanding as to what this will entail (for example, that an animal may be left alone overnight in the practice).

• social media – with veterinary surgeons unaware that their sometimes forthright comments on private facebook accounts may nevertheless come to the attention of others.

• Record keeping – where information about advice or treatment offered but declined is not recorded.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Meeting</strong></th>
<th>VN Council &amp; Council</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
<td>1 May 2018 &amp; 14 June 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title</strong></td>
<td>RVN PI Committee Chair’s Report to Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Classification</strong></td>
<td>Unclassified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary</strong></td>
<td>This report sets out the work of the Registered Veterinary Nurse (RVN) Preliminary Investigation (PI) Committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Decisions required</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attachments</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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ROYAL COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SURGEONS

REGISTERED VETERINARY NURSES PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE

CHAIR’S REPORT TO (VN) COUNCIL 1 May 2018 / (RCVS) COUNCIL 14 JUNE 2018

Introduction:

Since the last Report to Veterinary Nursing Council there have been two meetings of the RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee (20 February and 3 April 2018). The next scheduled RVN PIC meeting is on 22 May 2018.

RVN Concerns received / registered:

Between 31 January 2018 and 12 April 2018 there were five new Concerns received against RVNs. Of these five new Concerns, three are currently under investigation by the Case Examiners Group (a veterinary and lay member on RVN PIC and a Case Manager). Two Concerns were closed by the Case Examiners Group as there was no arguable case.

RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee:

There were three new cases considered by the RVN PIC between 31 January 2018 and 12 April 2018. One Concern was closed on the basis that there was no realistic prospect for serious professional misconduct affecting fitness to practise. However, in closing this Concern the RVN PIC decided it was appropriate to issue advice to the RVN in respect of responsibility under Part 2.4 of the Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses:

“2.4 Veterinary nurses must communicate effectively with clients, including in written and spoken English, and ensure informed consent is obtained before treatments or procedures are carried out.”

The purpose of issuing advice is to seek to minimise the chances of any similar issues occurring in the future. The RVN PIC advice remains on record at the College for five years and may be taken into account if concerns of a similar nature are brought to light during that time.
One other case had been referred to professional conduct by the CPD Referral Group in September 2017. The RVN failed to respond to subsequent correspondences including allegations which were raised in December 2017. Due to the RVN’s continued failure to respond, the RVN PIC Chairperson authorised the RCVS Chief Investigator and a Veterinary Investigator to carry out an unannounced visit to the RVN on 9 February 2018 and to report back their findings to the RVN PIC for consideration.

The RVN PIC considered the Investigators report and noted that the Respondent intended to come off the RVN Register but was under the mistaken impression that this could be fulfilled by failing to pay the annual renewal fee. The RVN’s name shall not be removed off the Register if there is an outstanding concern against him or her. In all the circumstances, on this occasion, the RVN PIC did not consider it appropriate to refer the matter to the Disciplinary Committee on the basis that public interest is safeguarded by allowing the RVN’s request that their name is removed from the practising register for non-payment. This decision was on the understanding that it should be made clear to the RVN that if in the future if she / he wished to apply for restoration to the practising register, she / he would be required to provide evidence of the CPD required or evidence of undertaking a suitable refresher course to comply with the level of CPD as is determined by the RCVS.

The final case is referred to the College's solicitors for formal statements to be taken. Once this process is completed the case will be returned to the RVN PIC for consideration and will be included in a future report to VN Council.

**Ongoing Investigations:**

The RVN PI Committee has four ongoing cases. Of these four ongoing cases, one case had been held open for a maximum period of 2 years to ensure continued monitoring or until the RVN is compliant with the required minimum CPD hours for veterinary nurses (45 hours over a rolling three-year period). The RVN properly requested that due to the personal circumstances, which were supported by documentary evidence, the RVN PIC allow his / her voluntary removal from the practising register. The RVN PIC agreed to allow the RVN to voluntarily remove his/her name from the practising register. The RCVS Registration Department was informed accordingly. One case has been referred to solicitors for statements; one case is adjourned pending the outcome of an RVN’s appeal against conviction by the criminal court. The Professional Conduct Department is in contact with the Procurator Fiscal Department and this matter will be included in a future Report to VN Council; and one case is adjourned pending receipt of the RVN’s comments on the allegations raised against him / her.

.../

Council Jun 18 Al 08b – RVN PIC rpt Unclassified Page 4 / 5
Health Concerns:

There are currently two RVNs being managed in context of the RCVS Health Protocol.

Referral to Disciplinary Committee:

Since the last report to VN Council, the RVN PI Committee has referred one case to the RVN Disciplinary Committee and this case is listed for July 2018.

MDH/12/04/2018
## Meeting
RCVS Council  

## Date
14 June 2018

## Title
Disciplinary Committee Report

## Classification
Unclassified

## Summary
Update of Disciplinary Committee since the last Council meeting on 8 March 2018

## Decisions required
None

## Attachments
None

## Author
Chloe Newbold  
Clerk to the Disciplinary Committee  
Tel: 020 7202 0729  
Email: c.newbold@rcvs.org.uk
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Report of Disciplinary Committee hearings since the last Council meeting on 8 March 2018

Background

1. Since the last update to Council on 8 March 2018, the Disciplinary Committee (‘the Committee’) have met for eight hearings. Of which, seven have been Inquiry hearings and one restoration hearing. The Veterinary Nurses’ Disciplinary Committee (‘VN DC’) have met once.

2. Due to the increase in disciplinary hearings and, limited space and availability at the RCVS, the disciplinary function has been moved off-site twice, so far this year, to the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators in Bloomsbury Square, London. Feedback from Committee members has been that the location is fit for purpose and the transition smooth.

Hearings

Mr David Smith

3. A four-week hearing was listed over February and March for the Committee to hear an Inquiry into Mr David Smith. In March 2017, the hearing was adjourned following Mr Smith’s application to adjourn on the basis that he was appealing his criminal conviction. His appeal was unsuccessful and the hearing was relisted for February 2018.

4. The charges related to a conviction of conspiracy to commit fraud, received at Maidstone Crown Court, for which he was sentenced to 30 months’ imprisonment in July 2016; and a number of charges that related to his treatment of five different animals. The basis of these charges included:

   a. failure to perform adequate examinations and/or undertake sufficient investigations
   b. failure to make any adequate clinical records
   c. failure to respond or communicate adequately


6. At the outset of the hearing, Mr Smith was unrepresented and, although he attended day one of the hearing, he did not return until after the College had completed its case at the facts stage and called all of its witnesses. On commencement of the second week, Mr Smith returned and gave evidence to the Committee and addressed each of the charges against him.

7. On deciding findings of fact, the Committee found nearly all charges proven with the exception of one of the clinical charges. On receipt of the findings of fact, Mr Smith advised the Committee that he would not be attending the remainder of the Inquiry. You can find the decision on facts
8. The Committee decided to proceed in Mr Smith’s absence as he had been fully aware of the nature, structure and timing of the proceedings and despite being encouraged by the Chair to remain throughout he had consciously absented himself from key parts of the process. Following this decision, the Committee concluded that the clinical charges amounted to disgraceful conduct in a professional respect and the conviction rendered him unfit to practise veterinary surgery. Summing up on disgraceful conduct, it stated:

‘The facts of the case demonstrated a total abrogation of Mr Smith’s professional responsibilities which are to protect the health and welfare of animals maintain public confidence in the profession and declare and uphold proper standards of conduct and behaviour.’

9. At sanction stage, the Committee took into account the mitigating factors identified in the case, including the written testimonials provided by Mr Smith’s clients and the aggravating factors such as, the risk of harm to the animals named in the charges and that Mr Smith had not demonstrated any insight into his behaviour. The Committee noted that paragraph 53 of the Disciplinary Procedure Guidance indicates that removal from the Register may be appropriate where the behaviour is fundamentally incompatible with being a veterinary surgeon. It summed up:

‘Mr Smith’s lack of treatment for the animals in his care caused harm. Mr Smith demonstrated a total disrespect for the Code of Practice. Further he deliberately lied to his Regulator. He demonstrated deep seated attitudinal issues including a misplaced belief in his own abilities and had no insight or commitment to do anything different in the future.’

10. In respect of the clinical charges and the criminal conviction, the Committee found removal from the Register was the only appropriate sanction in both cases.


Miss Hannah Wilde RVN

12. The Veterinary Nurse Disciplinary Committee met on 26 and 27 March 2018 to hear an Inquiry into Miss Wilde. The Inquiry related to five charges including three criminal convictions plus allegations that she had held herself out as an RVN when she was not on the Register; and that she had made a written representation on an application form for restoration stating she had no criminal conviction.

13. At the commencement of the hearing, the Committee were advised that Miss Wilde would not be attending the hearing, however she had clearly requested for the hearing to continue in her absence and had asked for documentation to be passed to the Committee. Within this documentation, Miss Wilde advised that she admitted Charges 1-3. In light of this information,
the Committee decided to proceed in her absence and, on receipt of copies of the conviction, decided that charges 1-3 were proven.


15. In respect of Charge 4, the Committee noted Miss Wilde’s submission that she believed the submission of a cheque would suffice to be restored to the Register. However, it was noted that she had restored herself in the past and would have known that this was not the case. In relation to Charge 5, Miss Wilde had submitted that a Probation Officer had told her that her conviction was spent and that she need not declare it. The Committee found this version of events highly unlikely plus Miss Wilde had not supplied any evidence to support this. Therefore, in relation to both charges, the Committee found Miss Wilde to be dishonest and found all charges proven.

16. In respect of Charges 1-3, the Committee found Miss Wilde unfit to practise as a veterinary nurse and that Charges 4-5 amounted to disgraceful conduct in a professional respect. The full decision can be accessed on the RCVS website: https://www.rcvs.org.uk/document-library/wilde-hannah-ruth-march-2018-decision-on-disgraceful-conduct/

17. On deciding sanction in relation to Charges 1-3, the Committee stated:

‘The Committee is of the view that removal is the only appropriate sanction having regard to the dishonest nature of the convictions because Ms Wilde’s conduct demonstrated a serious and repeated departure from professional standards and was fundamentally incompatible with remaining on the register.’

18. And in respect of Charges 4-5, the Committee took into account the mitigating factor that Miss Wilde had difficult personal circumstances and she is apologetic for her behaviour and demonstrates some insight. However, they concluded that the only appropriate sanction was removal from the Register.

‘Ms Wilde demonstrated a lack of respect for her Regulator and a disregard of her Code of Professional Conduct. She deliberately dishonest to her Regulator. In those circumstances the likelihood of repetition was significant in the Committee’s view….to maintain public confidence in the profession and to declare and uphold proper standards of conduct and behaviour and to maintain confidence in the Regulator.’


Mr James Staton

20. An application for adjournment was granted in January to enable Mr Staton to obtain legal advice. The charges against Mr Staton related to non-compliance with numerous requests from the RCVS for CPD records and, failing to have professional indemnity insurance or equivalent arrangements in place between 1 January 2012 and 7 November 2017. The full charges can
21. The Inquiry resumed on 4 April 2018 and, on commencement of the hearing, the Committee were presented with an application from Mr Staton to dispose of the case by allowing him to give undertakings that he would retire from practice and never apply for restoration. The application was not opposed by the College.

22. The Committee were referred to previous cases by way of precedent, namely RCVS v Cartmell (2012), RCVS v Oliver (2013), RCVS v Lindridge (2013), RCVS v Rodale (2015), RCVS v Denny (2017) and RCVS v Westwood (2017). In those cases, the Committee disposed of the case in the way requested by Mr Staton. Although, it was accepted that there would be cases where such a course is not an appropriate disposal.

23. The Committee took into account Mr Staton’s long and otherwise, unblemished career, that he has retired and closed his practice and it would not be proportionate, or in the public interest, for there to be a contested hearing. Therefore, the Committee accepted this is a proper case in which the Inquiry should be adjourned sine die and Mr Staton was removed from the Register with immediate effect.


Miss Natalia Oakes

25. Between 16-19 April, the Committee met to hear allegations against Miss Oakes of dishonesty and false certification. The charges alleged that Miss Oakes had signed a Greyhound Board of Great Britain (“GBGB”) Residential Kennel Inspection Form in her capacity as a veterinary surgeon stating that:

- there were 55 greyhounds in the kennel, when there were in fact more
- the kennels were in an acceptable condition, when they were in fact not


27. At the outset, Miss Oakes admitted the charges above but did not accept that she knew the form was inaccurate and/or dishonest. Although, during her oral evidence, she admitted that her actions had been dishonest but maintained that everything she did was in the best interests of animal welfare. Her reason for completing the form was to appease the owner of the kennels to ensure that he would not hinder any plans to remove and rehouse the dogs. In light of her admissions, the Committee found all charges proven.

28. The Committee moved onto decide whether these charges found proven amounted to disgraceful conduct in a professional respect. Disgraceful conduct is conduct that falls far short of what is expected of a veterinary surgeon and, in their decision, the Committee stated:
“this remains a case of false certification and it is important, in the public interest, and for the protection of the reputation of the profession, to ensure that false and admittedly dishonest certification is not acceptable. The Committee concludes, in its judgement, that the Respondent’s conduct constitutes disgraceful conduct in a professional respect.”

29. On considering sanction, the Committee took into account various aggravating and mitigating factors and summarised that:

“the Respondent’s motivation for what she did was governed by her overwhelming wish to promote the health or welfare of the greyhounds…no actual harm or risk of harm to any animal occurred in this case. There was no financial gain…and the Committee has been told that she charged no fee for her extensive efforts in organising or assisting with the removal and rehousing of the greyhounds.”

…for the future, the Respondent must be astute to ensure that she does not allow herself to become involved in a situation where there is a conflict of interest between her rights and obligations as a veterinary surgeon and her passionate involvement in greyhound rescue. The Committee is also concerned to ensure that the Respondent keeps well in mind the importance of true and accurate certification in the event that she is required to sign any certificate in the future in her capacity as a veterinary surgeon.”

30. The Committee decided to impose a formal warning and the full decision can be found here: http://live.rcvs.netxtra.net/document-library/oakes-natalia-alison-april-2018-decision/

Mr Seymour-Hamilton

31. The Committee met on 23 April 2018 to hear an application for restoration from Mr Seymour-Hamilton. This follows five previous applications, all of which have been unsuccessful. The Legal Assessor reminded the Committee that it is not bound by its previous decisions.

32. In June 1994, Mr Seymour-Hamilton was removed from the Register after being found guilty of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect. At the time, the Committee described him as showing a total disregard of basic hygiene and care for animals and was such as to bring the profession into disrepute. In his current application, and in oral evidence, Mr Seymour-Hamilton accepted the decision made by the Committee in 1994 but contested Mr Walsby’s evidence that his practice was open, as Mr Seymour Hamilton affirms that it had in fact been closed at the time of the inspection.

33. In support of his application, Mr Seymour-Hamilton had provided lengthy material and, in his oral evidence, he explained that, as described by him, he is a specialist in veterinary herbal medicine and would love to share this expertise, however he could not obtain peer review for the licensing of certain formulas as his name has been removed from the Register.
34. The Committee noted paragraph 70 of the Disciplinary Committee Procedure Guidance and the various factors to take into account upon deciding whether to restore an individual to the Register. With regards to Mr Seymour-Hamilton’s challenge of Mr Walsby’s evidence, the Committee stated:

“It is not for this Committee to consider it. Moreover the finding of the Committee represents a determination which was not challenged by the applicant until one of the more recent restoration applications. He never appealed it. Nor did he attend at the original hearing.”

35. The Committee were concerned with the length of time the applicant has been removed from the Register, 24 years in total and veterinary medicine had developed profoundly during this period. The Committee was not satisfied that his skills were up to date and he could practise veterinary medicine safely.

36. On consideration of all factors, the Committee refused his application. The full decision can be found here: https://www.rcvs.org.uk/document-library/seymour-hamilton-warwick-j-april-2018-decision-on-application/  

Dr Susan Mulvey

37. In December 2017, a request for an adjournment from Dr Mulvey’s representatives was granted on the basis that they needed time to take instructions from their client. Consequently, the Inquiry was relisted for 25 and 26 April 2018.

38. The charges against Dr Mulvey included:

   a. non-compliance with repeated requests from the RCVS for CPD records;
   b. practising with no professional indemnity insurance;
   c. failing to provide a client with results of laboratory tests and failing to respond to the client’s communications regarding the whereabouts of the results


40. At the outset of the hearing, Dr Mulvey admitted all charges and also accepted that these amounted to disgraceful conduct in a professional respect. The Committee decided that all charges, whether individually or in combination, amounted to disgraceful conduct in a professional respect.

41. Moving onto sanction, Dr Mulvey gave oral evidence to the Committee and drew upon a number of mitigating factors that had contributed to her actions during the relevant period. These included difficult personal circumstances as well as being clinically understaffed. In addition, the Committee heard from a number of testimonial witnesses and considered the references provided in support of Dr Mulvey as “impressive”. However, they found that there had been a
blatant disregard for the role of the RCVS and the systems regulating the profession as well as a slight risk to the health of an animal under her care.

42. On consideration of the above, the Committee decided to postpone judgement for one year provided that Dr Mulvey complies with a set of undertakings throughout. Dr Mulvey agreed and signed the undertakings.

43. In its decision, the Committee stated:

“The Committee recognised that Dr Mulvey has been subject to undertakings before and yet committed the disgraceful conduct the subject of this inquiry. But it bore in mind the context of that conduct and it observes that the undertakings previously imposed in reality address a particular aspect of her practice. This Committee hopes that when the matter is relisted before it, the Respondent will be able to demonstrate that she has finally been able to address her administrative shortcomings. If she cannot do so, she will know that the Committee that sits on her case at the resumed hearing is likely to have more restricted options for disposal of her case.”

44. The full decision, and details of the undertakings, can be found here: https://www.rcvs.org.uk/document-library/mulvey-susan-catherine-april-2018-decision-of-the-disciplinary/

Mr Roman Villar

45. Between 30 April – 3 May 2018, the Committee met to hear an Inquiry into Mr Villar in relation to his dealings with the owner and potential buyers of a horse. The charges against him included:

a. not making it clear over the telephone to the buyers that he had not undertaken a pre-purchase examination;

b. failing to declare a conflict of interest to the buyers, as the seller was his client;

c. failure to explain the pre-purchase examination process to the buyers.


47. The Committee heard live evidence from the buyers and also from the College's expert witness on his opinion of what constitutes a pre-purchase examination. Mr Villar did not admit any of the charges and, in his oral evidence, he did not accept the buyers’ versions of events nor the evidence of the expert witness; and maintained that he had not carried out a pre-purchase examination, had never indicated that he had and he did not consider the buyers as his clients.

48. The Committee found that Mr Villar to be a reliable witness and concluded that he had no reason to believe that the buyers thought he had undertaken such an examination; and he had not in fact undertaken such an examination.
49. The Committee found Charges 1(ii) and Charge 3 proven.

50. The College submitted that the Charge 1 (i) - failing to declare a conflict of interest, amounted to disgraceful conduct in a professional respect, as had been the view of the College’s expert. This was contested by the Respondent.

51. On consideration of submissions from either side, the Committee concluded:

“The Committee does not find that in the particular circumstances of this case, namely being asked to speak to a potential purchaser without warning and without being made aware of the contractual arrangements which had been made…the Respondent should properly be the subject of a finding of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect.”

52. Therefore, the case was dismissed and the full decision can be found here: [Link]

Dr Horia Elefterescu

53. On Tuesday 8 May, the Committee convened for an seven day Inquiry to hear allegations against Dr Elefterescu, who attended the hearing but was not represented. In light of the absence of legal representation, the Legal Assessor clearly explained the process to Dr Elefterescu.

54. The charges related to a number of different animals over the course of Dr Elefterescu’s employment with CVS. These included:

   a. Failure to undertake an adequate examinations of animals under his care
   b. Undertook unnecessary surgical procedures
   c. Made dishonest/misleading entries in his clinical records
   d. Performed surgery inadequately

55. The full charges can be found here: [Link]

56. The College called a number of witnesses, each of whom Dr Elefterescu questioned during cross-examination although he did not challenge the witnesses in relation to all disagreements, despite it being explained to him that it was important he did so.

57. Dr Elefterescu gave oral evidence to the Committee and admitted a number of his clinical failings, although he strongly denied he had acted dishonestly. The Committee found his evidence at odds with the objective evidence of several other sources and found that he was prepared to change his account of events during his evidence on several occasions.

58. Ultimately, the Committee found Dr Elefterescu a wholly unreliable witness and found almost all charges proven, apart from Charge 6(d). The full findings of fact can be found here:
On summing up their decision on whether the facts found proved amounted to disgraceful conduct, the Committee stated:

"The...clinical failures...are very serious, amounting as they do to failures in the basics of animal care and resulting in suffering to the animal. They involve widespread breaches of the Code, including not only the obligation in relation to animal health and welfare (breached in a large number of instances: examination, investigation, reading radiographs, diagnosis, failure to provide necessary treatment and inappropriate surgery) but also the specific obligations of the Code in relation to record keeping.

In addition to his clinical and record keeping failures the Respondent has been found to have acted dishonestly. This dishonesty would have impacted upon professional colleagues and any owner who viewed the records. It has the potential to undermine public confidence in the profession. The Respondent was also dishonest in a letter written in August 2017 to his regulator."

Dr Elefterescu’s submissions on sanction drew upon mitigating circumstances such as: there have been no subsequent complaints; language difficulties, he has made subsequent efforts to avoid repetition of his misconduct; and he was previously of good character. The Committee also took into account aggravating factors including that Dr Elefterescu had limited insight into his failings; he had been dishonest; there was a breach of client trust and there was actual injury to an animal.

On balance of the factors above, the Committee decided to remove Dr Elefterescu from the Register.

The full decision on disgraceful conduct and sanction can be found here: https://www.rcvs.org.uk/document-library/elefterescu-horia-romeo-razvan-may-2018-decision-on-disgraceful/

Upcoming Hearings

- 31-1 June 2018
- 4-5 June 2018
- 18-22 June 2018
- 16-20 July 2018
- 6-13 August 2018

There is currently one Inquiry hearing listed before the VN DC on the following dates:
• 24-27 July 2018

65. Four further cases have been referred to the Committee for Inquiry. The Clerk will list these cases as soon as possible.

66. A case that was adjourned in October 2017 is due to be relisted in July.

Appeals

67. Two appeals have been lodged with the Privy Council, however no dates have yet been set.