

Summary	
Meeting	Education Committee
Date	27 February 2024
Title	Education Committee Minutes 14 November 2023
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Decisions required	None to note
Attachments	None
Author	Britta Crawford Senior Education officer b.crawford@rcvs.org.uk / 020 7202 0777

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	
Appendix	Confidential	

Education Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2023

Members:	Dr Abbie Calow	
	Ms Linda Ford	Lay member
	Mrs Susan Howarth	
	Mr Tim Hutchinson	
	Professor Matt Jones	
	*Professor Tim Parkin	
	Professor Stuart Reid	
	*Professor Susan Rhind	
	Dr Kate Richards	Chair
	Ms Anna Bradbury (arrived at 11am)	Student representative
Mr Luke McLinden	Student representative	
By invitation:	Dr Melissa Donald	Observer from the Officer Team
	Professor Stephen May	Advanced Practitioner Panel Chair
	Dr Martin Whiting	PQSC Chair
	Dr Susan (Sue) Paterson	VetGDP subcommittee
	Dr Claire McLaughlan	Statutory Membership Board
In attendance:	Dr Linda Prescott-Clements	Director of Education
	Ms Laura Hogg	Senior Education Officer
	Ms Claire Holliday	Senior Education Officer
	Mr Jordan Nicholls	Lead for Undergraduate Education
	Ms Beckie Smith	Education Officer
	Ms Jenny Soreskog-Turp	Lead for Postgraduate Education
	Ms Hayley Stinchon	Senior Education Officer
	Mr Kieran Thakrar	Education Officer
	Mrs Kirsty Williams	Quality Assurance Manager
	Ms Lizzie Lockett	CEO

Apologies for absence and welcome

1. Apologies were received from Professor Parkin and Professor Rhind.

Declarations of interest

2. There were no new declarations of interest.

3. It was noted that Dr McLaughlan was not listed in the attendance at the meeting on the 12 September 2023 but otherwise the minutes were agreed as a true record.

Action: Update attendance list in the minutes from the 12 September 2023

4. The minutes from the joint meeting between Education and Registration Committee were agreed as a true record.

Matters arising

5. The actions from the previous minutes had been taken or were included in the agenda.

Education Department update

6. The Director of Education, Dr Prescott-Clements, gave an oral update on the work of the Education Department. Most areas of work were covered on the agenda, but Dr Prescott-Clements informed the committee that the RCVS had recently hosted an inter-regulatory group meeting where regulators from across the health professions met to discuss best practice, CPD and sharing data. She thanked Ms. Williams for chairing the meeting in her absence.

Apprenticeships

7. Professor Elizabeth Hughes from Health Education England joined the meeting to discuss the implementation of apprenticeships for doctors within the NHS. She explained that they started the process by reviewing the standards and outcomes of traditional medical training to see if they could be aligned with an apprenticeship programme, which they could. All medical students need to undertake the medical licensing assessment (MLA) managed by the General Medical Council (GMC) so it was agreed that that would also be the endpoint assessment for the doctors taking the apprenticeship route meaning that all doctors must pass the same exam before they can register with the GMC.
8. They had then spent a long time engaging with stakeholders and as a result a trailblazer group was established, comprising a variety of stakeholders from medical schools, employers, patients, the GMC, and the British Medical Association. There was also an implementation group that was divided into five subgroups, which created a toolkit/booklet which provided advice to employers who were considering joining the apprenticeship scheme.
9. There are now four medical schools piloting the process. The first cohort of 120 apprentices began in September. Each medical school is approaching this in a slightly different way, some are doing remote or hybrid learning for the academic portion of the scheme while allowing apprentices to work locally.
10. There are still some concerns, among certain groups, about whether doctors can be trained to the same standards through apprenticeships as the traditional route. The NHS has spent

just under 1 billion pounds per year on locums who are covering the gaps in care right now so hopefully the apprenticeship scheme can attract local workforce and help address some issues of health inequalities especially in the north of England.

11. Education Committee were very interested in the development of apprenticeships and there were some discussions around funding as it needs to be employer led. It was felt that it is an interesting development and would require careful consideration and details about how it would work in the veterinary sector that is much smaller and does not have an organisation like the NHS to fund/ implement it. It was noted that a panel discussion has been organised by the British Veterinary Association (BVA) at the London vet show so it was agreed that the Education Committee would be updated regarding the discussion and committee can discuss any potential next steps at the next meeting.

Action: Add apprenticeship discussion to agenda for next meeting

CPD

12. The committee noted the minutes from the meeting of the CPD Policy and Compliance subcommittee and Ms. Ford highlighted some of the discussions at the meeting such as continuing with the comms plan to educate the profession about the flexibility of the CPD requirement and reflection with some case studies. She informed the committee that changes to 1CPD had now been completed including a new feature where activities do not count towards the hour requirement unless members reflect on them.
13. Ms. Ford informed the committee about a letter that had been received from Rev. A Wright regarding stress and mental health of the profession. Several areas of concern were mentioned in the letter including the CPD requirement and recording reflections.
14. The committee were reassured that RCVS had responded to the letter and the committee felt that there were some misunderstandings about the requirement, for example that only formal external activities count as CPD. There have been several webinars and case studies about workplace based CPD but the CPD subcommittee will continue to discuss with comms how to continue to promote the flexibility of the CPD requirement.

Action: CPD Policy and Compliance subcommittee to discuss the letter at next meeting

Advanced Practitioner (AP) Status

Approval of Qualifications

15. The committee was informed of the process for the approval of qualifications which could be accepted for AP status and that once a qualification has been approved there is currently no ongoing review process or Quality Assurance (QA). In order to improve the process, it was suggested that the RCVS reviews such qualifications every five years to check that the

content remains current and to consider any significant changes since the qualification was last approved. The committee approved the process of reviewing eligible qualifications for AP status every five years.

Advanced Practitioner List

16. The committee noted the list of Advanced Practitioners that have been approved in 2023.

VetGDP: Minutes from the meeting held on 14 October 2023

17. Dr Paterson, chair of the VetGDP subcommittee presented the minutes to the committee. The committee had reviewed the statistics for VetGDP (including the numbers of graduates signed up and completions), approved a new policy-related Entrustable Professional Activity (EPA), considered the QA report and agreed the new 18 months' time-limit that will be implemented from 2024.

18. The committee noticed that many portfolios had not been approved the first time they were submitted but were reassured that the peer-review process was robust and that the process should not be seen as pass or fail but an opportunity for another experienced Adviser who has completed the peer-review training to review the portfolio. The feedback from the peer-reviewers has proven very useful for graduates and their advisers.

Veterinary Clinical Career pathways (VCCP) project

19. Dr Prescott-Clements informed the committee that the veterinary clinical career pathway proposal had been discussed at RCVS Council. The workstreams were received positively and were approved with the project timeline and costs across the next two years. Dr Prescott-Clements has received many positive emails from stakeholders who were interested in contributing to this work and the committee will be updated regularly on progress.

20. The committee discussed whether a new GP specialty training programme could be protected, or trademarked but it was noted that it is difficult to trademark a curriculum or learning outcomes, but any platform developed should be protected. It was agreed that it should be discussed and monitored by the new VCCP Working Party.

ENQA Report

21. The committee was thanked for their attendance at the review meetings in June, which was noted positively by the ENQA panel. Ms. Williams compared the outcomes from the review in 2018 with this review, and informed the committee that based on the review, the ENQA board had accepted the continuing membership of the RCVS for the next 5 years.

22. The only standard not fully met by RCVS was 3.4 – Thematic Analysis, and Professor May shared his views linking to the review in 2018. He suggested that the RCVS might need to

ensure that they fully understand what ENQA regards as a Thematic Analysis before continuing their work in this area.

EMS

2024 EMS Policy

23. In September 2022, Education Committee agreed to future proposals for the EMS Policy to be introduced in 2024, which included a reduction in the number of weeks EMS required from 38 to 30 weeks in total, alongside enhanced quality assurance. In September 2023, Education Committee requested a number of amendments to the draft policy and guidance.
24. The latest draft policy and guidance were presented. The Committee suggested that the first paragraph (p7) was vague and potentially misleading as it could be interpreted as students not being able to see anything “new” on EMS.
25. Following discussion, it was agreed to amend the guidance to: *“Clinical EMS must complement what students have learned in the core curriculum (e.g., in practical classes, clinics etc.) but not replace any element of core competency education. EMS placements should provide students with the opportunity to consolidate learning and skills which have already been actively taught during their veterinary programme. It is acknowledged that students may learn new techniques and acquire further knowledge whilst on clinical EMS placements, however the responsibility of formally teaching students must remain with the veterinary school”*.
26. It was requested that an additional sentence be added to page eight of the policy, item 2 (number of weeks), reflecting what a typical working week in hours would be, i.e., A typical working week would equate to 35 - 40 hours.
27. The terminology used to describe pre-clinical/animal husbandry/animal handling was considered. It was noted that there are inconsistencies in the use of terms within the new EMS policy. The Committee agreed that use of the term ‘animal husbandry/AHEMS’ should be implemented going forward, and references to Animal Handling or Pre-clinical EMS should be replaced.
28. Professional EMS was discussed. The previous policy outlined that a student could undertake two weeks of professional EMS, providing they had a genuine interest in this area. It was noted that there was no stipulation on the number of weeks a student could attend as a professional EMS placement in the 2024 EMS policy. It was explained that the ‘two-week rule’ had been omitted from the new policy to allow more flexibility for the students that demonstrated a strong interest in this area and enable them to tailor EMS to suit their own learning objectives.

29. Additional guidance for students that were intercalating and wanting to complete EMS was requested. However, it was confirmed that, in most cases, intercalating students would not typically be enrolled on the veterinary programme during intercalation. Due to them not being registered as a veterinary student, they would not be covered by the Practice by Students regulations, and only be able to carry out duties a lay person could undertake and, therefore, would not be able to attend most EMS placements during this period.
30. A request was made regarding the rationale for rolling this policy out one cohort at a time to be communicated to students. It was confirmed that all current students had already received written communication from the RCVS President (via Veterinary Schools Council) regarding the changes anticipated in the 2024 EMS policy. This letter gave a rationale explaining why current students will continue to follow the current EMS policy, not the 2024 EMS policy.
31. Ms. Bradbury raised concerns that Cambridge students would be affected unfairly by the implementation of the new policy *only* for students commencing the programme in 2024, due to their six-year syllabus. As this matter related to the implementation of the policy, rather than the policy itself, it was agreed that this would be considered outside of the Education Committee meeting.
32. Another suggested amendment was to make it clearer that students and providers needed to have communication regarding where students were up to with their studies. It was noted that this existed within the policy, and this would be facilitated through the new EMS database.
33. There was a discussion on whether students exempted from any EMS weeks because of prior experience should be advised to make up these weeks in other areas where they felt less confident. Vet school representatives on the committee felt that in suggesting this, even though it was made clear that it was not mandatory or required, it could lead to unnecessary anxiety in any student that felt pressured to make up these weeks. It was agreed that it was appropriate for the College to recommend that students may wish to seek more experience in areas where they are less confident or less experienced, as long as it was clear that this was not mandatory. If the student remained anxious following this revision, then it was accepted that this should form a conversation between the student and the vet school.
34. It was also asked that the guidance make it clear who was responsible for deciding whether a student should make up any exempted weeks. Following consideration, Education Committee agreed on the following wording to be added to the policy:

“Universities are permitted to consider granting exemptions to the full 10 weeks AHEMS requirement on a very exceptional basis (up to a maximum of 5 weeks), where a student can provide evidence that they have considerable animal handling experience gained on a previous course at tertiary level, or through extensive and relevant work experience. Whilst it is not mandatory to make up this reduction in weeks, any time saved by allowing exemption in one particular area should usually be spent on developing skills in other areas, or with other species, where students may not be as familiar/comfortable. The decision on whether a

student makes up any exemption is at the discretion of the vet school, in conjunction with the student concerned following discussion”.

35. Education Committee were then asked whether they were now content to approve the policy, subject to the above amends. There were no objections, and the 2024 EMS policy was approved.

Action: Education Department to update the policy with suggested changes from EC and publish as final.

EMS National Booking Database

36. Education Committee was updated regarding progress with the development of the database. The new developer was now in post and the digital team had been working on the wireframes and started coding. The paper highlighted the key developments, including a breakdown of the process of four prototype phases and their end date for completion.
37. It was added that, following a meeting with the Major Employers Group, some of the employers already had their own EMS databases in place, however, many were still keen to utilise the RCVS database as well, and had shown a very positive attitude towards the development. Many have agreed to sign up to be included in the initial user testing of the database before it goes live in Autumn 2024.
38. There was discussion on how the RCVS EMS database could be integrated with the schools' own EMS databases. It was noted that most of the schools use different types of databases, and that the RCVS database was not designed to replace their systems but create an overarching database which facilitates schools in meeting the new EMS standards and EMS policy. The RCVS EMS booking database would not facilitate feedback on placements, this will continue to rest with the schools.

Statutory Membership Exam (SME)

39. The Committee received a paper on the SME updating them about exam dates and training for the TestReach programme. An update on the current candidate numbers was reported: there are 437 candidates on the 'intention to sit' list, 108 of whom have completed an examination application form with 95 having paid or are ready to pay. The Committee heard that there appeared to be an unusually high number of candidates from Nigeria this year and that the candidates had been very quick this year to submit their paper when usually this is done in early January, just before the deadline. There was a concern that if numbers continue to grow significantly it may be difficult to administer the OSCE section of the examination in its current format. The education team confirmed that alternative formats were being considered and the list will be closely monitored in case changes are necessary.

40. The Committee heard that the evaluation of the SME is in progress. Some of the psychometric data had been received, more was expected soon. When the full report is received this will be reviewed and any required enhancements to the exam highlighted.
41. There may be an opportunity to make updates to the Statutory Instrument for the SME. The proposals for changes were presented to the committee. These included:
- To allow more than one diet per year
 - To allow passed written exam components to be carried forward within 18 months, so candidates do not need to start again from the beginning at each attempt.
 - To allow retakes of individual written exam components.
 - Exam costs to be itemised for the (entire) written exam and OSCE. Retaken written components would be an additional cost.
 - Updated wording to enable fees to be paid for refugee candidates, without cost having to go through a third-party organisation.

Education committee supported these suggestions. It was confirmed that suggested amended wording for the Statutory Instrument would be developed and shared with Defra for feedback.

Fellowship Subcommittee Update

42. It was noted that three candidates remained enrolled on the Fellowship by Thesis programme. All candidates remaining have been invited to resubmit their thesis, with a final deadline of September 2024.

Minutes for the previous Fellowship Sub-Committee meeting were noted.

PQSC

43. Education Committee heard about the PQSC discussions at its meeting in October 2023. In particular, a discussion regarding members conflicts of interest and how to manage those moving forward.
44. A comment was raised by a member regarding the PQSC's use of the term 'lay member' in the minutes, it was felt that a lay member should be from outside the profession. It was agreed that this would be taken back to PQSC for clarification.

Action: Report back to PQSC that the term 'lay member' (on paragraph 10 of the minutes) should apply to someone from outside the profession.

FHEA Discussion: Standard 5.1 Guidance

45. The paper and its background were presented to the committee and members were informed that at the October meeting PQSC had discussed the Fellowship of Higher Education Academy (FHEA) and had voted (via e-mail) 8 -1 in favour of the FHEA meeting Standard 5.1. Education committee ratified the decision.

Action: Amend guidance for Standard 5.1 to include the FHEA.

Core site definition

46. The paper was presented to the committee and members were informed of PQSC's discussions surrounding the definition of a core site (with regard to teaching). The Committee heard how PQSC had agreed to move the focus of the definition towards Day One Competence. As such, the new definition would read:
A core site is anywhere where formal teaching and learning takes place as part of the programme to enable students to become fully Day One Competent, and where students are required to attend in order to complete their degree (including an entire 'split' cohort). This does not include EMS, however, this may include elective/selective rotation sites if students are required to attend in order to become Day One competent.

Annual monitoring guidance

47. Education committee was presented with the updates and rationale for the recent changes to the annual monitoring form and guidance. It was noted that initially changes to the guidance had been requested by schools (last year), however, after holding drop-in sessions with the schools in November this year, more queries and amendments had been requested. The committee heard that, considering this, schools had been given an extension until March 2024 to submit their annual monitoring.
48. A point was raised by the committee, warning that some students may be identifiable due to small numbers in some of the categories (for example disability). It was agreed a note would be added to the guidance enabling schools to record those numbers as 'less than 5' on the annual monitoring form.

Action: Add a note to annual monitoring guidance stipulating where individual students could be identified, schools can record numbers as 'less than 5' in those categories.

Risk Register

49. The risk register was received and noted. The committee requested that we add new risks around the work of the new clinical career pathway workstreams and also review the wording and ratings for the number of SME candidates.

Action: Education Department to update the risk register.

Any Other Business

50. Ms. Donald informed the Committee that Standards Committee would now meet at 9.30 for remote meetings and Education Committee agreed to change the start time for remote meetings to 9.30.

ACTION: Update start time for remote EC meetings to 9.30

Date of Next Meeting

51. The date of the next meeting is 27 February 2024 at 10am. This meeting will be held in person.

Summary	
Meeting	Education Committee
Date	27 February 2024
Title	Advanced Practitioner status statistics
Summary	This paper gives an overview of Advanced Practitioners' (AP) statistics.
Decisions required	To note the statistics. To approve the qualification recommended by the AP panel (<i>a summary of the qualification and the subcommittees discussion will be presented by the Chair of AP panel, Professor Stephen May</i>).
Attachments	Annex 1: qualification recommended for approval by the AP panel
Author	Laura Hogg Senior Education Officer L.hogg@rcvs.org.uk / 020 7202 0736

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	

¹Classifications explained

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation or publication.
Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.

²Classification rationales

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Background

1. Advanced Practitioner (AP) status was established in spring 2014. The original purpose of the list of Advanced Practitioners was to provide a clear indication to the profession and the public of those veterinary surgeons who have been accredited at postgraduate certificate level (Master's level 7) by the RCVS, by virtue of having demonstrated knowledge and experience in a particular area of veterinary practice (including general practice) beyond their initial primary veterinary degree. Inclusion on the list would demonstrate that the individual holds an appropriate qualification and that they have stayed up to date in their field of practice since achieving their certificate level qualification.

Advanced Practitioners

2. There are 1116 veterinary surgeons listed as an Advanced Practitioner with the majority (60.3%) being female. The table below shows this total split by gender.

Gender	Total	%
Female	673	60.3
Male	443	39.7
Total	1116	100

3. The first Advanced Practitioners were listed in 2015; this was also the year with the highest numbers of APs listed. The table below shows the number of APs listed each year since 2015 and how many of those are still currently on the list. The majority of APs are still on the list, having re-applied for the status.

Year	Total listed	Currently listed	% still listed
2015	595	309	51.9
2016	171	111	64.9
2017	137	79	57.6
2018	110	72	65.5
2019	124	103	83.1
2020	107	96	89.7
2021	132	123	93.2
2022	117	116	99.1
2023	144	144	100
Total	1637	1153	70

4. APs need to pay an annual fee each year and also re-apply every five years in order to maintain their status. The main reason APs are removed from the list is because they have not re-applied (42.7%). The table below shows numbers of those who were removed from the list and the reason why. We do not currently investigate reasons for not re-applying.

Removal reason	No. removed	%
Became a specialist	31	6.3
Didn't re-apply	209	42.7
Non-payment of AP annual fee	101	20.6
Non-payment of VS renewal fee	2	0.4
Non practising	24	4.9
Voluntarily removed	123	25.1
Total	490	100

5. There are 34 designation areas; almost a quarter (24.7%) of APs are listed in small animal surgery. The number of APs per designation can be seen in the table below.

Designation	Total	%
Animal Welfare Science, Ethics and Law	1	0.1
Bovine Reproduction	5	0.4
Cattle Health and Production	19	1.5
Companion Animal Behaviour	10	0.9
Emergency and Critical Care	95	8.1
Equine Dentistry	21	1.8
Equine Internal Medicine	36	3.1
Equine Lameness	3	0.3
Equine Practice	41	3.5
Equine Stud Medicine	7	0.6
Equine Surgery - Orthopaedics	19	1.6
Equine Surgery - Soft Tissue	4	0.3
Fish Health and Production	1	0.1
Laboratory Animal Science	1	0.1
Pig Medicine	1	0.1
Poultry Health and Production	1	0.1
Production Animal Practice	1	0.1
Sheep Health and Production	8	0.7
Small Animal Cardiology	8	0.7
Small Animal Dentistry	7	0.6
Small Animal Dermatology	16	1.4
Small Animal Medicine	199	17.0
Small Animal Medicine - Feline	40	3.4
Small Animal Orthopaedics	12	1.0
Small Animal Practice	8	0.7
Small Animal Surgery	288	24.7
Veterinary Anaesthesia	15	1.3
Veterinary Cardiology	38	3.3
Veterinary Dermatology	36	3.1
Veterinary Diagnostic Imaging	49	4.2
Veterinary Ophthalmology	114	9.8

Veterinary Pain Management	1	0.1
Veterinary Public Health	1	0.1
Zoological Medicine	62	5.3
Total	1168	100

6. It is possible to be listed as an AP in up to three designations, provided the applicant holds the relevant qualifications and fulfils the CPD and other requirements for each. The majority of APs only hold one designation but almost 5% (55 APs) are listed in two designations. The table below shows the number of designations APs hold.

No. of designations held	No. currently listed	%
1	1052	94.27
2	55	4.93
3	9	0.81
Total	1116	100

7. To be able to apply for AP status applicants need to have been on the practising register and have been working in their designated area for at least five years. Almost a quarter of APs are aged between 41-45. The table below shows APs by age group.

Age group	No. APs currently listed	%
<25	0	0
26-30	5	0.4
31-35	221	19.8
36-40	210	18.8
41-45	273	24.4
46-50	161	14.4
51-55	137	12.3
56-60	55	5
61-65	43	3.9
66-70	6	0.5
71-75	4	0.4
76-80	1	0.1
Total	1116	100

Annex 1

Qualification approved by the AP panel as eligible for application for AP (Small Animal Practice) status:

- University of Nottingham, Masters in Advanced Clinical Practice (Veterinary)

60 credits of this Masters programme are gained from RCVS CertAVP modules; an A module, a B module and 4 C modules; 3 of which are in 'Small Animal Clinical Practice'.

A further 120 credits are related to advanced clinical practice and general practice clinical teaching.

(Elements of the advanced modules are relevant to primary care, dealing with complexity and uncertainty, and decision-making and management in this context.)

This Masters degree has a comprehensive, well-designed assessment strategy, including an oral examination.

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Decisions required	To note
Attachments	None
Author	Hayley Stinchon Senior Education Officer h.stinchon@rcvs.org.uk / 020 8148 5055

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Specialists Subcommittee (SSC) - Minutes of the meeting held via Teams on 12 January 2024

Members:	Dr Alex Dugdale	
	Dr Linda Horspool	
	Dr Caroline Kisielewicz	
	Dr Michael Morris	
	Professor Tim Parkin	Chair
	Dr Cheryl Scudamore	

In attendance	Mrs Hayley Stinchon
	Mr Jordan Nicholls
	Ms Jenny Soreskog-Turp

Apologies for absence

1. There were no apologies for absence.

Declaration of interests

2. There were no new declarations of interest given.

Minutes of the previous meetings

3. The minutes were agreed as a true record of the previous meeting.

Matters arising

Self-assessment points

4. It was confirmed that the subcommittee secretary had updated the RCVS Specialist Information and Application Pack in relation to the changes in collating self-assessment points (combining points for section B & C on full RCVS accreditation re-applications). However, there was uncertainty as to how clear the guidance was. The subcommittee agreed that the guidance needed to be reworded to clarify the expectation of these sections.

Action: RCVS to draft new wording to the guidance on self-assessment points

Reference wording in the RCVS Specialist Information and Application Pack

5. Members noted that the wording in the information pack relating to the requirement for references with an application appears to contradict that within the guidance. It was agreed that

the exclusion of point 3 in section E would provide clarity that references are no longer required.

Action: RCVS to remove point 3, section E from RCVS Specialist Information and Application Pack

Extracts from Education Committee minutes

6. The subcommittee received feedback from the discussions at Education Committee meetings in 2023 on SSC matters, via relevant extracts from Education Committee minutes.

New and re-applications for Specialist status

7. Eleven new applications and 25 re-applications for RCVS Specialist status had been received prior to December 2023 and circulated to the subcommittee. Each application was discussed by subcommittee members within the meeting. A total of 25 applications were accepted; 3 applications had decisions pending based on further information to be submitted; 8 applications were rejected.
8. When considering the applications, it was apparent that some applicants had varying degrees of detail in their CPD entries and discrepancies with regards to reflection on their CPD. The Chair requested a meeting with the Chair of the CPD subcommittee to discuss what would be considered to be acceptable in terms of CPD evidence.

Action: RCVS to facilitate a meeting with the Chair of CPD subcommittee

9. It was agreed that the names of the applicants approved by SSC should be recommended to be included in the List of RCVS Specialists by Education Committee.

Action: Recommend to Education Committee the approval of names to be included in the List of RCVS Specialists

Specialist application criteria within the RCVS Specialist Information and Application Pack

10. The subcommittee were invited to consider the proposed changes to the current Specialist Information and Application Pack. The following proposals were agreed:
 - Removal of the reference to new applications being reviewed annually, as new applications will be reviewed approximately every three months.
 - Dates to be changed to reflect the current year.
 - The annual renewal fee and application fee to be updated as agreed by Council.
 - Removal of section E, point 3 with regards to including references.
 - Review of the wording with regards to expert and scrutineer reports, to reflect that reviewing papers for refereed scientific journals **cannot** be included.

- Reword the section covering CPD submission. It was agreed that CPD can be included to cover the previous 5 calendar years prior to submission.

Action: RCVS to draft the above changes and present at Education Committee for approval

Publications and CPD evidence submission guidance

11. Currently, there is confusion as to what classifies as 'the past 5 years' in terms of publications and CPD evidence submission. Some applications in this last submission window included publications and CPD records from five years prior to the date of application submission, some from five calendar years prior to application submission. Due to the varying dates throughout the year that applications are submitted, the subcommittee agreed that CPD and publications should be submitted to cover the past full 5 calendar years (Jan – Dec) and any relevant CPD and publications from the current year.

Action: RCVS to draft new wording of CPD requirements in the RCVS Specialist Information and Application Pack and present at Education Committee for approval

Specialists holding multiple diplomas

12. Members were invited to consider the proposal of allowing dual specialism in certain fields, following the joint RCVS/BEVA joint officers meeting in October 2023. The British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA) had reported that there were crossovers in certain disciplines, for example, small animal internal medicine and sports medicine and that there could be an opportunity for dual specialism in some areas. It was noted that this had previously been discussed, and agreed, by the subcommittee in January 2019 and was declined by Education Committee, as they preferred to follow the current policy from EBVS stating that a specialist should spend 60% of their time practising in their specialist field.
13. One member of SSC was aware that the EBVS will be considering changing their own policy in the near future and that, as part of this review, they may allow dual speciality. Committee members agreed that it would be favourable to wait and see what the outcome of the EBVS policy, and understand their rationale, before reconsidering this request.

Action: Await the new policy from EBVS

Membership of the Specialist Subcommittee

14. SSC noted the previous and current members of the Specialist Subcommittee.
15. Dr Scudamore is in her third year on the subcommittee. The length of service would normally be three years, however, extensions can be granted to allow for consistency or continuity and the committee members agreed that it would be preferable to keep Dr Scudamore in situ for another term. Dr Scudamore was agreeable with this suggestion. Decision to be confirmed by the incoming president.

List of Specialists

16. A list of current specialists was received and noted.

Any other business

Specialism in deer work

17. A query from the chair of the British Deer Veterinary Association (BDVA) was presented to the SSC. BDVA had requested guidance on the potential for establishing RCVS specialist status in deer work, as they have an individual who is seeking to become a specialist in this field. There are currently no obvious species-specific postgraduate qualifications that cover deer, and it was agreed that following a route to FRCVS would not qualify this individual to become a deer specialist.

Action: SSC Chair to provide feedback to BDVA chair

New committee member induction training

18. SSC were invited to suggest ways in which further support could be given to new committee members. One suggestion was to 'buddy' a new member with an experienced member and for these two members to assess one or two applications together, thus enabling the new member to have an understanding of the assessment procedure.
19. Another suggestion was for all members to have a 30-minute training session at the beginning of December each year. This was the most favourable idea amongst the committee.

Action: Discuss support suggestions with the Education Department and inform SSC of the intended plan to develop induction training for new members

Zoo/Wildlife Specialist

20. A veterinary surgeon (VS) had recently contacted the RCVS to enquire about applying to be specialist in Exotic Animal Medicine. They stated in their email that this title did not appear on the 'drop down' menu on the application form. There was some confusion from the VS, as the 'Find-a-Vet' website lists a specialist in Exotic Animal Medicine. SSC noted that this term was gradually being phased out by the RCVS and there is currently only one specialist with this title.
21. 'Zoo/Wildlife Specialist' encompasses all exotic species, inclusive of reptiles, small mammals, birds etc. The RCVS Specialist Information and Application Pack states that the forementioned species are included within this specialism. Therefore, the subcommittee suggested that the applicant should be invited to apply under the title of 'Zoo/Wildlife Specialist'.

Action: RCVS to respond to the email, clarify the term “Zoo/Wildlife Specialist” and invite the VS to apply in this field of specialism.

Date of next meeting – TBC for January 2025

Summary	
Meeting	Education Committee
Date	27 February 2024
Title	Update from the CertAVP subcommittee
Summary	Minutes from the meeting of the CertAVP subcommittee on the 21 November 2023
Decisions required	To agree the subcommittee recommendation to remove applications for equivalence of modules.
Attachments	None
Author	Laura Hogg Senior Education Officer L.hogg@rcvs.org.uk / 020 7202 0736

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	

¹Classifications explained

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²Classification rationales

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Minutes of the CertAVP Sub-Committee meeting held on 21 November 2023

Present: Stephanie Richardson
James Horner
Abbie Calow - Chair
Matt Jones
Liz Chan
Ros Carslake
James Wood
Claudia Hartley
Rachael Gregson

In Attendance Laura Hogg
Linda Prescott-Clements
Jenny Soreskog-Turp

The meeting was held remotely by Microsoft Teams.

Apologies for Absence

1. There were no apologies for absence.

Declarations of interest

2. There were no new declarations of interest.
3. The Chair informed the subcommittee of a new decision tree approved by Council. This would be circulated to the subcommittee for reference.

ACTION – Secretary to circulate to subcommittee

Minutes

4. The minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2023 were held as a true record.

Matters arising

5. All matters had been actioned or were in papers for discussion.
6. The subcommittee were informed that Education Committee had approved the two new designations recommended by the subcommittee; in Equine Emergency and Critical Care and Small Animal Clinical Practice.

Synoptic exam policy

7. Dr Prescott-Clements thanked the subcommittee for their comments on the synoptic policy and welcomed any comments on the updated rubric.
8. There was discussion on how to support the providers in implementing the changes to the policy, and how examiner training could be run before the next synoptic exams in March and April. Several examiner training dates would be made available, mostly online but also in person where there is sufficient interest. The examiner training would help provide consistency and reliability. Training would also be available across the year as new examiners join.
9. There was some discussion around the rubric and how some elements may not be applicable for all designations. The committee were reassured that this would be covered in the training to ensure that the examiners had all the information and support needed to implement the changes in the new policy.

ACTION – Training dates for examiners to be circulated

Reviewing synoptic exam questions

10. The Chair started a discussion around synoptic exam questions and the current process for the subcommittee to review these. There was some discussion around what the subcommittee were looking for in reviewing the exam questions, and how this current QA process needs to be reviewed, especially now in line with the updated synoptic policy.
11. It was noted that when the subcommittee membership changes so does the expertise in subject areas and it can be difficult for members to review questions outside of their area of practise. There had been a recent breach in confidentiality where exam questions were shared with colleagues outside the subcommittee in order to be appropriately reviewed. It was suggested that members of the Advanced Practitioner assessment panel might review the exam questions, using a repository to ensure all material is kept secure and confidential.
12. The subcommittee discussed the difficulty reviewing the exam questions, ensuring all elements were appropriate (subject breadth, professional skills, correct level). Dr Prescott-Clements suggested the Education team could carry out a preliminary check of questions for their structure and suitability for assessment, prior to a review of appropriate content being reviewed by a panel of experts, before coming back to the subcommittee for review.
13. As Advanced Practitioner panel members are paid for their time assessing AP applications, the finances would need to be looked at and the Finance and Resourcing Committee consulted on remuneration for reviewing exam questions.

ACTION - Develop new QA process for synoptic questions

ACTION - finances to be reviewed, a timeline for implementation to be circulated

Module updates

14. The subcommittee was presented with modules that had been updated using the new module template. Some of the subcommittee commented that due to the volume of updated modules they had received, they didn't have sufficient time to review them fully. The subcommittee asked whether they were being asked to look at the template or the module content itself. As the content of the modules had been reviewed by the modules leaders and agreed between providers, the subcommittee were being asked to review the format and structure.
15. It was suggested that the updated modules should come back to the next meeting to give the subcommittee time to review them all. However, as there was a need to update these modules more urgently the subcommittee agreed to look at these and provide any comments in the next week.

ACTION – Subcommittee to provide comments on the updated modules in the next week

Nottingham QA reports

16. Dr Richardson presented the QA reports from Nottingham and welcomed any comments.
17. The subcommittee felt the format of the reports was good and observed that the candidate feedback mentioned that they had not been able to access teaching material in advance. Dr Richardson explained that this was due to delays in teaching material being submitted as it was the first year running the modules, and that teaching material was now available to candidates.

Veterinary Primary Care (VPC) designation

18. The subcommittee were informed a candidate had applied to sit the Veterinary Primary Care synoptic exam. As no format for this synoptic exam has been agreed the subcommittee were asked to discuss the structure for this exam.
19. One of the aims in the designation document states that it should 'be compatible with the requirements of Advanced Practitioner status'. The requirement for qualifications to be eligible for Advanced Practitioner status is that they include at least 40 clinical credits in the designation area. The current module combination for VPC makes it unclear as to whether candidates would meet this requirement. The subcommittee were unsure whether some of the modules listed in the module combination document had a clinical element. The subcommittee discussed making it clear on the document that 40 clinical credits were required for AP status and it would be for the candidate to ensure this.
20. Dr Richardson told the subcommittee that the VPC synoptic exam was something Nottingham was going to look at in the future, but not for the next 12-18 months.
21. The subcommittee discussed what content should be covered in the exam and who to approach as examiners, and whether this would be across all species.

22. The subcommittee suggested looking at the learning outcomes for the designation to create exam questions, as the synoptic exam is an exam on the subject area, not an exam on the module content a candidate has taken.
23. There was a suggestion to add to each of the module documents whether the module was clinical or not, but interpretation of the word clinical would need to be defined and agreed on first.
24. The subcommittee questioned the rule for eligible Advanced Practitioner qualifications to have 40 clinical credits and asked for this to be reviewed. This would be taken to Education Committee for discussion.

ACTION – look at learning outcomes for the designation at next meeting
ACTION – Education Committee to discuss AP status 40 clinical credits requirement

Recognition of prior learning

25. Mrs Carslake informed the subcommittee of some problems Liverpool had encountered following the subcommittee's decision for equivalence applications to go to the providers instead of the subcommittee. The problems encountered were in relation to university rules and regulations regarding the recognition of prior learning.
26. The subcommittee discussed why equivalence applications were first accepted and felt this was a historical decision that may no longer be needed. There was some discussion as to whether the applications should come back to the subcommittee, but as previously discussed at the previous meeting the subcommittee did not feel they had the expertise to assess these applications.
27. The subcommittee agreed to recommend that applications for equivalence should no longer be accepted.

ACTION – Recommendation that Education Committee remove the option for equivalence.

RCVS synoptic exam reports

28. The examiner and observers' reports from the GSAS and ECC exams were noted.
29. The subcommittee observed that there was an instance where a candidate skipped ahead on slides provided by the examiners but were pleased to see the examiners had already considered how to avoid this happening in future exams.

Statistics

30. The statistics were noted.
31. A mistype on one of the module codes was noted on table 5.

32. There was some discussion around the high pass rate for some designations. This was thought to either be where small numbers sat these exams, or where candidates feel better prepared having completed modules in that designation at one provider, rather than completing different modules across multiple providers with different teaching styles.

Any other business

33. Mrs Richardson informed the subcommittee that she would be going on maternity leave in March and suggested Rob White as her replacement on the subcommittee. As Rob White has previously been on the subcommittee, they were happy to approve him as replacement.

Date of the next meeting

34. Dates for meetings in 2024 will be circulated by the secretary.

Laura Hogg
November 2023
l.hogg@rcvs.org.uk

Summary	
Meeting	Education Committee
Date	27 February 2024
Title	Veterinary Clinical Carer Pathway
Summary	This paper provides an update about the veterinary clinical career pathway project
Decisions required	To approve the Terms of Reference for the working group
Attachments	Annex A: WG Terms of reference Annex B: Skills matrix and profiles of members
Author	Jenny Soreskog-Turp Lead for Postgraduate Education j.soreskog-turp@rcvs.org.uk / 020 7202 0701

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	
Annex A	Unclassified	
Annex B	Private	

¹Classifications explained

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Introduction

1. The Veterinary Clinical Careers pathway (VCCP) project was approved by RCVS Council in November 2023.
2. In accordance with the agreed timeline, work started in January 2024 to develop invitations to tender documents and set up a working group that will report to Education Committee.
3. Education Committee has previously been sent details of membership, terms of reference and the invitations to tender by email.

Working Group

4. The VCCP Working Group will oversee the progress of the three work streams of the project and terms of reference for the group is available in Annex A. Education Committee has previously approved the terms of reference.
5. Education Committee was sent an email in January with details of the working group and they were also invited to comment on suggested members; and a majority of members approved each member. Most suggested members have accepted the role; and been very excited to help develop the new clinical career pathways. Unfortunately, there were some that were unable to join the working group due to time commitments, but they have been replaced based on suggestions from Education Committee. There is still one outstanding place for a farm vet that we hope to confirm shortly.
6. The confirmed members of the VCCP working group are:
 - Nick Cooper (chair)
 - Heather Bacon
 - Erin Burnett
 - Tim Charlesworth
 - Eilidh Corr
 - Karen Coumbe
 - Phil Cramp
 - John Fishwick
 - Jennifer Hammond
 - Aoife Reid
 - Adam Tjolle
 - Peter O'Hagan
7. There were a couple of comments from the committee about the need for more input from the profession and especially those working in general practice. There are only a limited number of places on the working group and there is a need for specific knowledge/expertise but there will be regular and multiple opportunities for stakeholder feedback and input from profession through multiple focus groups and stakeholder events (as per the PID). We will ensure that independent vets are represented well during focus groups and stakeholder feedback.

8. Feedback from Education Committee also suggested that we appoint a RVN to the committee but that member has yet to be agreed.
9. We are planning to run focus groups in person at various locations in UK in April, May and July and we will also present the project a lunch time session at BSAVA.

Invitations to tender (ITTs)

10. Education Committee reviewed the invitations to tender documents via email in January and following feedback they were updated with minor changes to the text and the evaluation criteria.
11. The deadline for expression of interest is on the 6th March 2024.
12. Education Department is also doing some desktop research to complement this work which will be presented to the working group at its first meeting.

Next steps

13. The working group is set to have their first meeting in March/April and Education Committee will receive regular updates about the progress of the work.

Veterinary Clinical Career Pathway (VCCP) Working Group

Terms of Reference

1. The Veterinary Clinical Career Pathway (VCCP) Working Group reports to Education Committee and is responsible for overseeing the development of the new clinical career pathways for veterinary surgeons working in the UK, which includes the following workstreams:
 - a. Workstream 1 (W1): Curriculum development for Veterinary General Practice (GP) specialty training
 - b. Workstream 2 (W2): Definition of veterinary clinical roles
 - c. Workstream 3 (W3): Developing flexible routes for specialist training.
2. The VCCP Working Group will:
 - Establish the overarching purpose of the veterinary GP specialty training programme. (W1)
 - Review and agree the curriculum statement for GP specialty training. (W1)
 - Identify the intended learning outcomes of the GP specialty training programme. (W1)
 - Consider existing evidence of effective training structures, learning environments, factors leading to trainee satisfaction, effective assessment strategies and quality assurance mechanisms, in order to develop the proposed GP specialty training programme. (W1)
 - Oversee the development of an implementation plan for the GP specialty training programme. (W1)
 - Oversee the development of a quality assurance process for the GP specialty training programme. (W1)
 - Consider the available research on the impact of RCVS Advanced Practitioner (AP) status and outcomes of the stakeholder event. (W2)
 - Oversee the development of clear definitions of the different clinical career statuses, and the educational requirements associated with each (W2)
 - Oversee the development of guidance on the scope, focus and responsibility of the roles associated with different clinical career statuses within the clinical veterinary team (W2)
 - Consider the effectiveness and impact of existing specialist training structures and learning environments across the veterinary sector and other professions (W3)
 - Oversee the development of proposals for more flexible routes to achieving speciality status (W3)

The working group will provide feedback on the proposals developed within the workstreams, and make recommendations to Education Committee for future plans associated with each.

Meetings

3. The working group will be in place for two years (2024 and 2025) and meet 4 times each year. It will meet remotely, unless there is a specific requirement to meet in person and some of the business may be conducted by email if considered appropriate by the Chair.
4. The working group has a quorum of 50%

Membership

5. Working group members should have a good understanding of the needs of veterinary surgeons. There will be 12 members, including representation of the following areas:
 - across species domains
 - independent practice
 - corporate practice
 - recent graduate / early career veterinary practitioner
 - Advanced Practitioners
 - Specialists
 - Education experience
 - lay member with knowledge of postgraduate education and training in a similar field (chair)
 - Remote/rural background
 - RVN
6. The working group may nominate new members as appropriate, to be approved by Education Committee.
7. The working group may co-opt individuals for their particular expertise for a defined period or defined task.

January 2024

Summary	
Meeting	Education Committee
Date	27 th February 2024
Title	Apprenticeships
Summary	<p>At the meeting in September 2023, Education committee were presented with a paper summarising the key points of the development of Doctor apprenticeships by the GMC. At their November meeting, Professor Elizabeth Hughes from Health Education England spoke about the process undertaken by the GMC and responded to questions from the committee members.</p> <p>The committee requested a further update following the panel discussion about apprenticeships at the London Vet Show in November 2023.</p>
Decisions required	To agree next steps in exploring apprenticeships for veterinary degrees.
Attachments	None
Author	Kirsty Williams Education Quality Improvement Manager k.williams@rcvs.org.uk / 02 079 651105

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	

¹Classifications explained

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Background

1. At the Education Committee meeting in September 2023, the Committee were presented with a paper summarising the key points of the NHS Medical Doctor (Degree) Apprenticeships. At their November 2023 meeting, Professor Elizabeth Hughes from Health Education England spoke about the process undertaken by the GMC and NHS to develop the apprenticeship and she responded to questions from committee members.
 2. The committee were advised that there would be a panel discussion about apprenticeships held by the British Veterinary Association (BVA) at the London vet show on 16th/17th November, so it was agreed that the Education Committee should be updated regarding the discussion and committee can then discuss a way forward at the next meeting.
 3. The panel discussion at the London Vet Show took place on Friday 17th November. Chaired by Rob Williams (Head of Talent , VetPartners Ltd), the other panel members were Professor Liz Mossop (Chair BVA EMS Working Group), Jenny Routh (Lecturer, Surrey University), Mary Thomson (Vice Principal, SRUC), Emmanuel Oloyede (Past president, Animal Aspirations). The discussion was hosted by BVA and was titled “Could apprenticeships transform veterinary education?”
 4. The key themes emerging from the discussion were primarily about the barriers, as follows:
 - There are different apprenticeship standards and requirements in the four UK nations, making a UK wide approach for a profession challenging.
 - The funding available currently covers only a 3-year degree programme, whereas the veterinary degree is a 5-year programme. For the Doctor apprenticeship, this shortfall is covered by additional NHS funding – not available for a veterinary degree. So how would the shortfall be met?
 - One of the barriers to young people applying to undertake a veterinary degree is the length of the programme (5 years), which may have an impact on their financial position. It was felt that an apprenticeship degree may help to overcome this barrier.
 - A vet in the audience questioned whether an apprentice graduate would have the same rigor of outcome as a traditional graduate. This was a concern of doctors about the medical apprenticeship, indicating that there needs to be some education about apprenticeships within the profession.
 - Another issue raised from the floor was how the university would ensure that their veterinary apprentices felt part of the student community, as they were off campus for the majority of their time.
 - Another concern raised was how an apprentice would gain omnicompetence across the species range, if they were undergoing their training within a practice that specialised in one species area (companion, equine or production). It was suggested that this might be how limited licensure could support veterinary education.
-

- There was a discussion about widening participation and how the current university admission requirements can be rather narrow and prescriptive, thus limiting the range of potential candidates. Maybe the apprenticeship admission requirements would be rather more inclusive?
5. The discussion raised a number of questions from the floor, and the overall feeling in the room was rather cautious towards the idea of veterinary apprenticeships, with a number of barriers being presented rather than solutions.

Summary	
Meeting	Education Committee
Date	27 February 2024
Title	Final 2024 EMS Policy
Summary	<p>At the November 2023 Education Committee meeting, the 2024 EMS policy was agreed as final, subject to the amendments suggested during the meeting being made.</p> <p>The agreed amendments have been added to the document and the final 2024 EMS policy is presented to note.</p>
Decisions required	None.
Attachments	2024 EMS Policy and Guidance
Author	<p>Jordan Nicholls Lead for Undergraduate Education 020 7202 0704 / j.nicholls@rcvs.org.uk</p>

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	N/A

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RCVS EMS Policy and Guidance 2024

Introduction

Extra Mural Studies (EMS) is a part of students' overall clinical education, and placements are a vital component of the veterinary degree as they provide a unique opportunity for students to gain valuable hands-on experience and practice skills acquired during the veterinary programme further in range of 'real' workplace learning contexts. Students are required to identify their own intended learning outcomes for EMS, with support from the vet school if needed, and undertake EMS placements in areas which complement and enhance their learning and which they feel will benefit them most.

Whilst both Intra-Mural Rotations (IMR) and EMS are experiential, EMS should be focused on students developing their understanding and applying knowledge and skills acquired during the veterinary programme within a range of veterinary workplace contexts. This experiential learning is highly valuable for students as they are able to augment the training they have already received with real-life, hands-on experience that cannot necessarily be captured as part of the formal curriculum, helping them to develop into capable and confident veterinary surgeons. EMS is also an opportunity for students to get further experience in decision making, team working and communication, as well as offer an insight into how finances work in practices away from an academic setting.

EMS placements offer students an important insight and introduction into the professional career of a veterinary surgeon and provide them with vital experience before they graduate. EMS also represents the beginning of a life-long cycle of continuing their own professional development outside of a traditional teaching context, which continues after graduation and throughout their career.

Students will, of course, acquire further knowledge and skills whilst on EMS placements. However, all Day One Competences must be covered by the Clinical Education delivered by the University, and EMS placements should not be used to address gaps within core Clinical Education.

This policy will be introduced in August 2024 for veterinary students beginning their programme in August 2024, and those starting their studies thereafter. Existing students (those enrolled prior to August 2024) will continue on the 2023 EMS policy.

Any questions relating to this policy should be sent to EMS@rcvs.org.uk

EMS Policy

Overview: amount and type of EMS

1. A total of **30 weeks** of EMS must be completed over the course of the veterinary degree programme before students are able to graduate.
2. Of these, **10 weeks** must be devoted to **animal husbandry EMS (AHEMS)**, to be completed throughout the pre-clinical years of the programme (usually 1st and 2nd years, however this could be up to the 3rd year in extended or intercalated programmes). Where appropriate for the curriculum model, some clinical EMS may be completed before the third year. However, in these instances, students must have been assessed as being competent and safe in animal handling for relevant species prior to the placement being undertaken.
3. The remaining **20 weeks** must be undertaken as **clinical EMS**, to be completed regularly over the final 3 years of the course (or clinical years) before graduation, with a recommended minimum of 6 weeks to be completed per year.

Animal Husbandry EMS (AHEMS) – 10 weeks

4. Animal husbandry EMS takes place during the earlier years of the veterinary degree course to allow students to gain further experience in animal handling and husbandry in all common domestic species, in authentic working environments where animals may be less used to being handled than in academic settings. Students will also begin to develop their professional skills with clients and animal owners on AHEMS placements.
5. A minimum of 10 weeks of is required. Students are permitted to carry out further weeks of AHEMS should they wish (this would be separate to the 20 weeks of clinical EMS).
6. Students must be permitted to choose placements based on their own learning and experience needs. Once a student has identified their learning and experience needs (with the support of university tutors if required), their intended learning outcomes (ILOs) for EMS placements must be agreed with their tutor and discussed with any potential placement provider prior to the placement being booked / confirmed. This will ensure that all parties, i.e., the student, the university and the EMS provider, are clear regarding the expectations of the placement.
7. Placements may take place across all major disciplines, and as placements should be based around individual student's needs, veterinary schools are not permitted to set specific species requirements for AHEMS placements. However, students are encouraged to complete placements which offer them a breadth of experience across different species in order to complement their studies.

8. Schools must ensure that students have been taught appropriately and fully understand the relevant aspects of animal handling and husbandry, including health and safety, prior to going on AHEMS.
9. Universities are permitted to consider granting exemptions to the full 10 weeks AHEMS requirement on a very exceptional basis (up to a maximum of 5 weeks), where a student can provide evidence that they have considerable animal husbandry experience gained on a previous course at tertiary level, or through extensive and relevant work experience. Whilst it is not mandatory for students to make up this reduction in weeks, any time saved by allowing exemption in one particular area should usually be spent on consolidating their skills in other areas, or with other species, where students may not be as familiar/comfortable. The decision on whether a student makes up any exemption is at the discretion of the vet school, following discussions with the student, and in their best interests.
10. All AHEMS placements must take place in person with the student attending on-site. This is to ensure that the student will be directly involved with handling animals and observing animal behaviours during the placement. Any placements where a student is not directly involved in handling animals and/or observing animal behaviours for a significant majority of the time spent there, would not be considered appropriate AHEMS.
11. All AHEMS placements must directly involve the student in a way that helps to broaden their experience, based on the knowledge and skills they have already acquired during their veterinary programme.
12. Placements should normally take place within an environment that is outside of the usual teaching environment of the individual student's own veterinary school. Placements can take place at other veterinary schools that the student is not enrolled at.

Clinical EMS – 20 weeks

13. Clinical EMS placements enable students to further develop the clinical and professional skills that they have been taught at vet school, through experiential learning in real workplace contexts. Clinical EMS placements must take place regularly during the clinical years of the veterinary programme, prior to graduation, with a recommended minimum of 6 weeks completed per year.
14. Students must complete a minimum of 20 weeks clinical EMS prior to graduation and are free to carry out further weeks should they wish and be able to.
15. Students are encouraged to undertake clinical EMS in the areas they feel would interest them and benefit their learning/experience the most. Schools must not impose any restrictions or quota on clinical EMS, e.g., completion of a minimum number of weeks in different species, although students should be encouraged to complete a broad spectrum of opportunities.

16. Once a student has identified their learning and experience needs (with the support of university tutors if required), their intended learning outcomes (ILOs) for EMS placements must be agreed with their tutor and discussed with any potential placement provider prior to the placement being booked/confirmed. This will ensure that all parties, i.e., the student, the university and the EMS provider, are clear regarding the expectations of the placement.
17. Clinical EMS must complement what students have learned in the core curriculum (e.g., in practical classes, clinics etc.) but not replace any element of core competency education. EMS placements should provide students with the opportunity to consolidate learning and skills which have already been actively taught during their veterinary programme and apply this across different professional contexts. It is acknowledged that students may learn new techniques and acquire further knowledge whilst on clinical EMS placements, however the responsibility of formally teaching students must remain with the veterinary school.
18. Clinical EMS must take place in person, with the student attending on-site getting “hands-on”, direct clinical experience with animals. This is to ensure that the EMS placement provides the student with the opportunity to further develop the skills they have learned through formal teaching on the programme. Clinical EMS placements should usually take place within an environment that is outside of the usual teaching environment of the individual student’s own veterinary school. Placements can take place at partner practices of the student’s veterinary school and also other veterinary schools that the student is not enrolled at.
19. Long term research placements that do not primarily involve animals can count towards the clinical EMS requirement at the discretion of the school, if a student has an interest in entering the research field, for example.

Professional EMS

20. Where a student has a genuine interest in a career that may not be clinically or research based, “Professional EMS” placements can be permitted in place of some clinical EMS at the school’s discretion. These could be placements that are not necessarily clinically based or directly involving animals. However, Professional EMS must still be a work-based placement in a working environment that is relevant to the veterinary profession. Online learning, whilst useful, is not permitted as EMS as all placements must take place in-person.

Guidance on RCVS EMS Policy

This document should be read in conjunction with the RCVS EMS Policy (2024)

Placement approval

1. The RCVS EMS Policy (2024) must be implemented by the veterinary school, and the school will be required to approve all EMS placements. Where flexibility is allowed for within the policy, the veterinary school is responsible for making the decision on what is an acceptable EMS placement.

Number of weeks

2. As stated in the policy, the requirement for completion of EMS is 30 weeks: 10 weeks animal husbandry EMS (AHEMS); and 20 weeks clinical EMS. This is the minimum requirement – students can complete further weeks of EMS if they wish.
3. A typical working week would normally equate to 35-40 hours. The duration of a ‘week’ should primarily be based on the EMS providers’ typical working week. For example, many providers will operate a 5-day working week (Monday to Friday). However, if a placement provider has asked the student to be present across 6 days from Monday to Saturday, but from 9am – 3pm, then that may also constitute one week. It is also accepted that some providers may operate 4-day weeks, perhaps with longer working days. The vet school will always have the final approval on what constitutes a “week” of EMS, and it is advised that common sense and discretion is applied. Exceptions can be made for bank holidays.
4. Vet schools must make allowances for flexibility in terms of how the EMS requirement is met. Placements may not necessarily have to take place over consecutive days. For example, a student could attend a placement over consecutive weekends, or a series of 1 or half day placements, which could count towards the requirement. Typically, 5 full days would count as 1 week of EMS.
5. EMS should be arranged outside of timetabled university activities. If a placement should fall outside the time of a usual university week, for example, a placement finishing on a Sunday night, making it unsafe for a student to travel back in time for a Monday lecture, the student should liaise with the school with regards to the most appropriate action. Schools have autonomy to make allowances for students’ absence from lectures or other timetabled university activity (other than IMR) or could discuss alternative hours with the provider to allow students to return to their timetabled activities.

International EMS placements

6. Both AHEMS and clinical EMS placements may take place overseas at the discretion and approval of the vet school. Schools must ensure that such placements have the correct insurance arrangements in place and offer an appropriate and safe learning experience for students.

Intended Learning Outcomes

7. As outlined in the EMS policy, intended learning outcomes (ILOs) must be discussed and agreed between all parties (student, school and provider) before EMS placements can go ahead, both for AHEMS and clinical EMS. This aims to ensure that the placement is aligned with the student's learning needs and that the provider is aware of the expectations as much as is possible.
8. When approaching EMS placement providers, the student should share their ILOs with them and seek agreement from them that their placement could offer relevant experience to meet these needs before the placement is fully confirmed and approved.
9. ILOs for more than one EMS placement can be agreed between the student and the tutor at the same time. ILOs should be individual to each student based on their own needs and interests, however, it is acknowledged that some can be more generic and some can be shared by more than one student, especially for some animal husbandry placements.
10. It is acknowledged that, despite communication prior to placements, ILOs may not necessarily be able to be met on placements due to a number of factors out of the control of the provider. ILOs may also change prior to (or during) a placement, and this is acceptable as long as all parties are in agreement and are fully aware of any changes. However, these should only be influenced by genuine learning needs and ILOs should not be changed only to secure more readily available placements.
11. ILOs for EMS placements are not the same as formal learning outcomes or objectives set as part of the main veterinary degree programme. EMS placements will not be formally assessed in terms of students meeting any intended outcomes, however ILOs should be the focus of students reflection following placements.

RCVS national EMS booking database

12. Vet schools, students and EMS providers are encouraged to make use of the RCVS national EMS booking database. The database will be able to assist students when searching for relevant placements and also facilitate the required communication between them and the provider in order to discuss the intended learning outcomes (as set out in the EMS policy). If the placement is accepted by the provider, the dialogue will remain open for the duration leading up to the placement to facilitate the discussion of all other aspects and arrangements for the placement if required.
13. Use of the RCVS national EMS booking database is not mandatory and vet schools may also use their own internal systems for helping students arrange placements. However, they must be able

to evidence that the EMS policy has been implemented effectively, including that appropriate and sufficient EMS has been completed by students and that ILOs are being agreed between student and tutor, and student and provider before placements take place.

Restrictions on EMS: Species requirements

14. There are no specific species requirements as part of the RCVS EMS Policy for either AHEMS or clinical EMS, and as stated, vet schools are not permitted to implement their own species requirements in addition to the RCVS EMS Policy

Types of EMS placement

15. The school is responsible for approving placement types, in line with the EMS policy. Online learning, whilst useful, is not permitted as EMS as all placements must take place in-person. It is acknowledged that as part of a clinical EMS placement, students may observe practice meetings that take place remotely. However, remote observation of clinics must not be allowed to count as EMS. This is not to say that it would not be beneficial learning for students, but the overall aim of EMS is to gain hands-on experience.
16. EMS placements must directly involve animals, unless they fall under the description of research placements or professional EMS as set out in the EMS policy. Such placements would be permitted at the discretion of the school.
17. Attendance at congresses or conferences is not permitted to count as any form of AHEMS or clinical EMS, either in-person or online. This excludes attendance if it forms part of a Professional EMS placement, for example a placement with a veterinary business and working on a stand as an exhibitor. However, it should not form the whole placement.
18. RCVS expects the majority of EMS placements to take place off-campus and away from university farms or hospitals, to allow students to gain further experience outside of the veterinary school environment.

Length of placement

19. Clinical EMS placements lasting at least 2 weeks generally allow time for students to get a better feel for the environment and cases seen whilst on placement, as well as being able to give the provider more time to be able to offer more effective mentorship and guidance. Therefore, longer placements, either consecutively or split up over a longer period should also be encouraged if students are able to find willing providers, as more time can be spent devoted to seeing cases rather than "settling in".
20. EMS can be completed flexibly by students. Individual placements of 1 week or individual days over consecutive weeks are permitted. Although EMS is recorded in weeks overall, this can be met flexibly through shorter or longer periods. There is no maximum limit to a placement length. However, it is recognised that the length of any particular placement would likely be influenced by

a combination of any, or all, of the schools' timetables and curricula; availability of the provider; and the student's own time and availability.

Professional EMS

21. The emphasis for clinical EMS needing to take place in a clinical environment involving live animals is reflective of the understanding that the majority of graduates will work in clinical practice, and therefore the RCVS would expect students to gain as much experience in clinical areas as possible before graduation. However, it is recognised that not all graduates will move into clinical practice, or may still be unsure, whilst studying, therefore the potential for some 'professional' or non-clinical EMS is possible. Professional EMS should only be permitted at the school's discretion if a student has a genuine interest in a particular area of non-clinical work. Online learning, whilst useful, is not permitted as EMS as all placements must take place in-person.

Summary	
Meeting	Education Committee
Date	27 th February 2024
Title	Thematic analysis; Meeting the ENQA standards.
Summary	The only standard that wasn't fully met at the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) review in 2023, was standard 3.4 – Thematic Analysis. We are keen to address this to ensure we are fully compliant with all standards. This paper describes the findings of the ENQA panel with regards to this standard, and how the RCVS can address this issue.
Decisions required	None
Attachments	ENQA guidance on Thematic Analysis Thematic review of Veterinary programme accreditation events in 2023
Author	Kirsty Williams Education Quality Improvement Manager k.williams@rcvs.org.uk / 02 079 651105

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	N/A

¹Classifications explained

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation or publication.
Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.

²Classification rationales

Confidential	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To allow the Committee or Council to come to a view itself, before presenting to and/or consulting with others 2. To maintain the confidence of another organisation 3. To protect commercially sensitive information 4. To maintain public confidence in and/or uphold the reputation of the veterinary professions and/or the RCVS
Private	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. To protect information which may contain personal data, special category data, and/or criminal offence data, as listed under the General Data Protection Regulation

Background

In the report following the review of the RCVS by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the RCVS was found to be fully compliant in all standards except one – standard 3.4 Thematic Analysis. This paper is to explore how the RCVS can meet this standard in future reviews.

The detail of this standard is:

3.4 Thematic analysis

Standard: Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.

Guidelines: In the course of their work, agencies gain information on programmes and institutions that can be useful beyond the scope of a single process, providing material for structured analyses across the higher education system. These findings can contribute to the reflection on and the improvement of quality assurance policies and processes in institutional, national and international contexts.

A thorough and careful analysis of this information will show developments, trends and areas of good practice or persistent difficulty.

The analysis and recommendations from the 2023 report are:

The panel recognizes that RCVS staff and committee members know the programmes they accredit well and regularly use the accreditation visits and annual monitoring to identify emergent themes as a basis for discussions with stakeholders and to suggest improvements across the sector. Due to the RCVS position as a regulator, however, their efforts result in the publication of topical reviews, guidelines and policy papers, rather than reports that would clearly fit under this standard.

In spite of the definition provided in the Thematic Analysis Policy, the panel concludes that there is still a lack of understanding of what thematic analysis should cover in terms of using the evidence from the accreditation reports to highlight common issues as a basis for enhancement across the sector. Namely, the term ‘thematic analysis’ is also used for analyses of accreditation visitations which is misleading in terms of the ESG terminology, as these are part of IQA; the Analysis of RCVS virtual accreditation reviews of vet schools 2021 would also belong to this category. Thus, while such reports are obviously within the remit of the Audit and Risk Committee, which is in charge of IQA, this might not be true of other reports listed in the Thematic Analysis Policy. Furthermore, the term ‘thematic analysis’ is also used for analyses of various metrics which, even though valuable in themselves and often a

basis for thematic analyses, lack the crucial reflective component. However, the analyses listed in the Plan to be published in the following years seem promising in this regard.

It is necessary to reflect on the requirements of the standard and clearly differentiate between thematic analyses – which focus on topics relevant for the reviewed programmes as identified by the visitation reports – and analyses focused on improving the review process – which are part of the RCVS internal quality assurance. The panel expects that this would lead to a revision of the existing plan and a critical analysis of the available accreditation reports as well as a discussion of potential topics with the stakeholders, both of which may require additional expertise.

Panel recommendations:

1. It is necessary to reflect on the requirements of the standard and clearly differentiate between thematic analyses – which focus on topics relevant for the reviewed programmes as identified by the visitation reports – and analyses focused on improving the review process – which are part of the RCVS internal quality assurance. The panel expects that this would lead to a revision of the existing plan and a critical analysis of the available accreditation reports as well as a discussion of potential topics with the stakeholders, both of which may require additional expertise.

Actions:

Following this report, research has been carried out to further understand the requirements of this standard. Reports of other agencies were reviewed, along with ENQA's own report on thematic analysis, and finally a discussion with the ENQA review coordinator to try to establish what good practice looks like for the RCVS.

The ENQA thematic analysis of agency reports provided some useful information, and the key points are highlighted here:

- The standard requires agencies to **systematically** use outputs from accreditation and QA activities (mainly reports) for analysis to infer the developmental and enhancements needs in the sector. Need to take account of local, national and international contexts in the analysis.
- The main aim of thematic analysis is to reflect and identify trends and actions for improvement or development in the sector. Examples of actions focus on the development of quality assurance processes in new areas or improving existing ones.
- Good practice dissemination includes annual bulletins and reports, seminars, conferences and journal articles.
- A good thematic analysis needs to cover all or some of the following:
 - Systematic use of quality assurance reports for analysis
 - Summarise key recommendations from a number of reports or carry out some comparative analysis. These analyses generate insights into good practices and areas for further development.
 - Thematic reports on specific topics
 - Analyses on specific topics, eg reports on themes emerging from reviews offering guidance, analysis of specific programmes;
 - Case studies of good practice;
 - Follow-up of projects;

- Seminars – eg thematic seminars for HEIs and other stakeholders on the issues of quality assurance in HE to identify specific topics that are important to the HE community., for example student-centred learning approaches and good practice in this area.
 - Additional gathering of information
- Reflection and actions following findings from thematic analyses closes the loop and completes the process. But this is more challenging to evidence.

Meeting with the ENQA review co-ordinator:

- Good practice – a summary picture of the outcomes of reviews. Needs to be something that will be useful to vet schools and other stakeholders.
- Need to review our accreditation reports and pick out common themes of good practice or of areas for improvement.
 - Could come from accreditation reports or from VetGDP surveys.
 - Could reflect on whatever has been identified and then carry out further research to get a fuller picture.
- Then publish the findings – website, social media, or a regular (annual or every other year is regular enough) newsletter to schools, or a seminar. Publication could just be a 1- 2 page newsheet.
- Needs to be an informed way of reflecting on the reports and actioning the findings.

Summary:

In order to meet the ENQA standard for thematic analysis, we need to select a common theme that is emerging either from the accreditation reports, or elsewhere, such as the VetGDP graduate and adviser surveys. The theme selected needs to be of relevance to the audience, ie the vet schools, and could be an area of good practice, or an area for improvement. Once the theme is selected, then further research is carried out to get a fuller picture of the topic, such as surveys, interviews, etc.

Once the theme has been explored, it needs to be published to show how the theme was selected, the further research carried out and a reflection on what can be learned, including possible actions.

The publication needs to be systematic, but this can be through publication on the RCVS website, or through a newsletter sent directly to the relevant stakeholders, or through a seminar. “Regular” publication can be as infrequent as biennially.

Example:

An example of good practice of thematic analysis was found whilst exploring the reports from other agencies. This agency took the accreditation events undertaken in a stated year and summarised the findings. These summaries are published on the website alongside the full reports for each establishment. Therefore, this was replicated using the data from the VS accreditation events undertaken in 2023. The report is provided below.

The key shortcoming with this report is that it does not provide a reflection or emerging actions. It also is limited to relatively few full accreditation events, and only reflects those events that used the 2023 standards and methodology. From a sample group of this size, it is debatable if this is sufficient to clearly identify an emerging theme or trend, or if it is just a series of recommendations and suggestions.

Thematic Summary report of Veterinary degree accreditation events – 2023

Introduction

In 2023, the new RCVS accreditations standards and methodology were launched and were used in accreditation events this year.

During 2023, there were ten accreditation visits; four were in the UK and six were overseas.

Of the UK events, one event was a full accreditation of an established programme as part of the seven-year cycle (Liverpool) and was a joint accreditation event¹; two were interim events for new programmes who had only been running for two (Aberystwyth) and three years (Harper and Keele) respectively, so will not be given a formal outcome, nor will the report be published. The final event in the UK was a focussed revisit (Surrey), that followed a virtual visit carried out during the covid pandemic in 2021. Therefore, according to the regulations, the programme had to be reviewed in person, 12 – 18 months after the virtual visit. In this case, the accreditation outcome was for a shorter period, so this event combined the two requirements and followed the previous, 2015, accreditation standards.

Of the overseas visits, one was the first accreditation of a programme that had just graduated their first cohort of students, was just accredited by the RCVS and was located in Hong Kong; the remainder were located in Australia and New Zealand and all were joint visits with either the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC), the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), or the South African Veterinary Council (SAVC), a combination of the three. Of these, three were full visits (Murdoch University, James Cook University and Adelaide University) and two were revisits (Melbourne University (full revisit across all standards) and Massey University (focussed revisit)).

All UK accreditation events were observed by the Education Quality Improvement Manager, and feedback on these was received from the panel members, staff and students. The accreditation event at City University in Hong Kong was carried out by a full panel from the RCVS and a member of the RCVS education department was in attendance. Feedback was received from the panel, staff and students. The accreditation events in Australasia were all joint events with other agencies, so fewer panel members from the RCVS were in attendance. Feedback from the panel, staff and students was not sought.

Following each visit undertaken solely by the RCVS (ie, not a joint visit), and the joint event that was undertaken with the RCVS as lead agency, a report and for the new methodology a rubric, were produced, which were then considered by both the Primary Qualifications Sub-Committee (PQSC) and Education Committee (EC) for the final accreditation outcome decision. The reports for the Australasian vet schools were all based on the AVBC format as this is the host agency, and the RCVS committees review the AVBC reports as part of the decision-making process. However, the accreditation decision for each programme is made independently by the RCVS and is not dependent on the outcome decided by the other agencies reviewing the programmes at the same time.

¹ a joint visit is one carried out with other agencies, namely Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC), the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), and the South African Veterinary Council (SAVC). A joint visit may include all or some of these agencies.

Accreditation reviews undertaken by the RCVS in 2023:

Vet School / HEI	Programme being accredited	Accreditation outcome	Year of next accreditation event
Liverpool Vet School	BVSc	“Accreditation for a shorter period” with a focused revisit across all of the recommendations and suggestions highlighted in the report, to occur in 2026.	2026
Aberystwyth & RVC	BVSc	None – an interim event during year 2 of the first cohort	2026
Harper & Keele	BVetMS	None – an interim event during year 3 of the first cohort	2025
Surrey Vet School	BVMSci Accredited against 2015 standards and methodology	Pending decision by RCVS committees in April 2024	Pending committee decision
City University (Hong Kong)	BVM	Accreditation for seven years	2030
The Murdoch University School of Veterinary Medicine	DVM	Pending decision by RCVS committees in February 2024	Pending committee decision
James Cook University	BVSci	Pending decision by RCVS committees in February 2024	Pending committee decision
University of Adelaide	DVM	Pending decision by RCVS committees in February 2024	Pending committee decision

Melbourne Vet School	DVM Accredited against 2015 standards and methodology	Pending decision by RCVS committees in February 2024	Pending committee decision
Massey University School of Veterinary Science	BVSc Accredited against 2015 standards and methodology	Pending decision by RCVS committees in February 2024	Pending committee decision

Thematic analysis of outcomes:

The following analyses only relate to those programmes that have been accredited by the RCVS and used the new accreditation standards that were introduced in January 2023. There were other events that took place in the year that were either revisits against the previous 2015 standards or took place using the rubric of the host agency, mapped to the RCVS standards. These are not included in this analysis. The analysis is divided into three categories – commendations, recommendations and suggestions. Where there are links between domains, or common themes in both the recommendations and suggestions, these have been highlighted. The information has been redacted and does not identify individual programmes or vet schools.

The analyses are divided into the domains into which the standards are categorised:

- Domain 1 – The Learning Environment
 - This domain focuses on the facilities and resources available to both students and staff. This includes teaching spaces, animal and non-animal resources, digital resources, literature, teaching equipment, on and off-site services (such as ambulatory, isolation and abattoir exposure). This will also cover the off-site resources used for teaching and learning.
- Domain 2 – Organisation, Culture and Values
 - The emphasis of this domain is on strategic direction, risk assessment and the inclusive nature of the learning environment. It looks at how discrimination is managed and how diversity is encouraged. There is also a focus on environmental sustainability.
- Domain 3 - Educational Governance and Quality Improvement
 - This domain explores the operational side of the programme, including finances, staffing numbers and skill sets, quality assurance and quality improvement mechanisms and processes to monitor and review student outcomes.
- Domain 4 – Supporting Students
 - This domain maps the student experience from application to graduation. There are standards to ensure that the welfare of students is met, as well as their educational needs

and wants, whilst ensuring the educational establishments are encouraging widening participation from a range of backgrounds.

- Domain 5 – Supporting Educators
 - This domain focuses on the welfare of staff, from recruitment onwards, ensuring that not only do staff have the relevant qualifications and skills for their role, but that they are supported during their employment.
- Domain 6 – Curriculum and assessment
 - This domain is very broad and addresses all aspect of the curriculum including the design, review and implementation of the curriculum; the expected learning outcomes; the inclusion and application of extra-mural studies (EMS); the validity, reliability and transparency of the assessment strategy, and the inclusion of research opportunities for students.

Thematic analysis of commendations

The following consolidates the areas of good practice that were identified during the accreditation events and the emerging themes.

- Domain 1 - The key themes emerging were on the impact of staff who provided support, in particular with learning resources such as libraries and clinical skills labs; and ambulatory services were commended for providing a high quality and impactful learning opportunities for students.
- Domain 2 – There is an increasing development of inclusivity for both staff and students, which is supported through policies as well as culture change. The environmental sustainability agenda is being addressed through both culture and research initiatives.
- Domain 3 - The areas of good practice were more limited in this domain, and in line with domain 1, focused on the commitment of staff in support of the student experience.
- Domain 4 – The main area of good practice was the range of strategies being employed by schools to encourage applicants from a variety of backgrounds, and this is employed from primary education onwards. Again, staff are key to addressing this domain, with acknowledgement of the impact of welfare teams and the responsiveness to student feedback.
- Domain 5 – During the 2023 period of accreditation, there were no areas of good practice identified for this domain.

- Domain 6 – The emerging area of good practice was the commitment to research opportunities for students, which are integrated into the programme.

Thematic analysis of recommendations

The following are the themes emerging in the areas that must be addressed by the vet school/university in order to meet the domain criteria.

- Domain 1 - There were not many recommendations emerging in this domain, but there was an emphasis on ensuring animal welfare through the implementation of policies including ethical animal use, and that practices being used for teaching are PSS (or equivalent) approved.
- Domain 2 - There were two key areas that were highlighted in this domain – to ensure there are effective strategic plans in place, and processes to identify and actively monitor and address risks across the programme.
- Domain 3 - There was a broad range of recommendations across this domain, however, there was a slight theme around improving stakeholder engagement. Other areas included reviewing the impact of workload on team members, ensuring there is assessment of holistic competence of learners, and systems to monitor and improve student attendance.
- Domain 4 - There were only two recommendations linked to this domain, with no emerging theme. The recommendations were to ensure the accreditation status of the programme was appropriately shared, and to update processes to be followed in the event of an adverse incident being reported.
- Domain 5 - There was a key theme emerging in this domain, and that was to ensure that all staff involved with student teaching, need to have completed a programme of quality assured teacher training. Another area emerging linked to Domain 3 and related to appropriate staff workloads.
- Domain 6 - There were highest number of recommendations associated with this domain. The emerging themes are linked to the provision in the programme for students to have hands-on experience of common conditions associated with primary care, ie general practice. The other key area was that all staff involved in student assessment must be appropriately trained. This also links with the teacher training theme emerging in Domain 5. One recommendation was to ensure the assessment strategy addresses holistic competence, which is also raised in Domain 3.

Thematic analysis of suggestions

The following is an analysis of the areas that are suggested for improvement by the vet school.

- Domain 1 - There are a couple of emergent areas that form suggestions for improvement. The main one was to increase access for students to live animals for both pre-clinical examination purposes and clinical examinations. Improving facilities featured as suggestions too, in particular ensuring there is space available for expanding cohorts. Finally, some schools needed to confirm that students were

exposed to abattoir experiences, and a collaborative culture was developed between undergraduate and post graduate students.

- Domain 2 – the suggestions for this domain were to respond to feedback from external stakeholders and for schools to develop their plans environmental sustainability. There were some commendations for environmental sustainability, indicating that where it is addressed, it is being done well, but there is room for improvement in other schools.
- Domain 3 – There are a number of suggestions within this domain, with subjects such as developing quality improvement frameworks; recruiting staff to vacant posts; engaging students with committees and formalising contracts with off-site providers. Some data analysis was also suggested, in particular of student performance related to their demographic.
- Domain 4 – there are only a few suggestions linked to this domain, but no clear themes emerging. However, some suggestions link to the recommendations, such as ensuring there is correct information on the website, in this case links to bursary information, links to support services and updated EMS information.
- Domain 5 – the suggestions here chime with the recommendations for this domain, namely to ensure adequate teacher training for staff involved with teaching students. Another emerging theme is to develop peer observations for staff.
- Domain 6 – this domain has by far the largest number of suggestions associated with it. Only one is linked with the exposure of students to hands on general practice cases, which was the key theme of the recommendations for this domain. There are some issues raised around assessment strategy in terms of authenticity of assessment and a holistic approach which were also recommendations. Staff workload is mentioned here in relation to assessment marking, and staff workload is also raised as recommendations in domains 3 and 5. The assessment workload for students also links to this domain. A final emergent theme is for the development of student research opportunities, which contrasts with the good practice seen in some schools.