

1 December 2020

Email: president@rcvs.org.uk

Website: www.rcvs.org.uk

Dear Veterinary Student,

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

I am writing to update you on some further temporary changes to the EMS regulations that have been approved by RCVS Council for current 3rd and 4th years; graduation years of 2023 and 2022 respectively (current 4th and 5th years for the University of Cambridge).

Following the recent changes that were approved in September, RCVS had agreed to review the policy in December as the situation with the pandemic progressed. To help inform this, we had requested data from all schools on the current completion rates by year cohort, against the figures that they would usually expect to see at this time of the year.

The data returned suggested that the current amendments to the number of weeks of pre-clinical EMS (for the 1st and 2nd years) remained appropriate, as did the current reduction of requirements in place around clinical EMS for the final year students. However, the current levels of completion of clinical EMS by 3rd and 4th year students appeared lower than expected, indicating that further amendments to the policy for these cohorts was appropriate. Following consideration by RCVS Council, I am happy to be able to update you all with the latest updates to EMS policy:

For the current 3rd years (4th year students at the University of Cambridge), and further to the reduction agreed in September, it has been agreed to reduce the requirement by a further four weeks. Therefore, the minimum clinical EMS requirement for the graduating class of 2023 will now be **17 weeks** of clinical EMS experience.

For the current 4th year cohort (5th year students at the University of Cambridge), a further reduction of five weeks has now been agreed, meaning that the minimum requirement for the graduating class of 2022 is therefore now **13 weeks** of clinical EMS experience.

Whilst there is no further reduction in the requirements for final-year cohorts at this time, we do recognise that these students may feel less confident in their professional skills on graduation than those in pre-Covid times, and so we are planning to launch our new Veterinary Graduate Development Programme (VetGDP) in 2021, a year earlier than originally planned. This programme, which will replace the Professional Development Phase, aims to focus on developing graduates' professional skills as well as clinical capabilities, and provide a meaningful and effective period of support for all veterinary graduates during the early years of their career.

For all year groups we are continuing to recommend that you make the most of any online resources that can aid learning, to help make up for the shortfall of in-person, “hands-on” placements. I would also like to convey to you that these requirements are for the minimum number of weeks to be completed, and that you should be encouraged to complete as much additional EMS as you are able to, if and when local restrictions allow. EMS is extremely valuable for gaining “real life” practical experience, to help develop your confidence in the techniques acquired during your programme.

With local tier or level systems being introduced, as well as further periods of lockdown likely in Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland and England, we recognise that further EMS opportunities for every year group may be affected, as well as there being likely disruptions over the Christmas holiday period when many of you would normally be on placements. We will be continuing to monitor the situation and will be carrying out periodic reviews of EMS policy every three months for as long as the pandemic continues. Any further updates will be posted on the RCVS website www.rcvs.org.uk, and communicated to you via your school.

Finally, I would like to thank you for your continued patience, and I hope that this update can help to ease any concerns that you may have had. As today is the first day of December, I would like to take this opportunity to be the first to wish you a Merry Christmas and I hope that you all manage to keep safe and well. Let’s hope that 2021 sees some positive improvements in the challenges we have all been stoically facing!



Dr Mandisa Greene
President, RCVS