Agenda for the meeting to be held on 19 May 2026 remote at 9.30 am

1.	**Welcome and apologies for absence**	
2.	**Declarations of interest**	
3.	**Education Committee minutes** a) Minutes of meeting held on 2 February 2026	Paper attached
4.	**Matters arising**	
5.	**Education Department update**	Oral report
6.	**Primary Qualifications Subcommittee (PQSC)** a) Minutes of the PQSC meeting held on meeting held on 14th April 2026 b) RVC report c) Queensland report d) JCU report e) Adelaide report f) Melbourne report g) Intra -Mural Rotations and student employment conflict of interest h) RCVS/SAVC agreement i) Standard 6.2 additional guidance	Paper attached Paper Attached Paper Attached Paper Attached Paper Attached Paper Attached Paper Attached Paper Attached Paper Attached
7	**Veterinary Clinical Career Pathways (VCCP)** a) Minutes from VCCP working group meeting 16 April 2026 b) Workstream 1 proposal c) Workstream 3 proposal	Paper attached Paper attached Paper attached
8	**Specialists** a) Specialist application criteria exemption b) Specialist list for ratification	Paper attached Paper attached
9.	**VetGDP and CPD** a) Minutes from the VetGDP and CPD compliance subcommittee meeting 27 March 2026 b) CPD deadlines c) Encouraging CPD compliance through Practice Standards Scheme monitoring d) VetGDP AI guidance	Paper attached Paper attached Paper attached Paper attached

10.	**AP Qualification Subcommittee** a) Minutes from the meeting on 5 February 2026 and 9 April 2026 b) CertAVP designation and training	 Paper attached Paper attached
11.	**AP Criteria Review**	Paper attached
12.	**Statutory Membership Examination** (SME) a) Minutes from the SME exam board held on 19 February 2026 and 26th March 2026 b) Update to refugee policy paper c) Update on 2026 diet	 Paper attached Paper attached Oral report
13.	**Exam Appeals Policy for synoptic exams**	Paper attached
14.	**VN Update**	Oral report
15.	**EMS**	Paper attached
16.	**BCVA survey on graduate transitions**	Paper attached
16.	**Risk register (EC and SME)** Items to add to the Risk Register	Paper attached
17.	**AOB**	
18.	**Date of next meeting**	15 September 2026 in person

Britta Crawford
Committee Secretary
May 2026
b.crawford@rcvs.org.uk
020 7202 0777

Education Committee (EC) Membership From July 2025

Secretary: Britta Crawford
(0207 202 0777, b.crawford@rcvs.org.uk)

Armitage-Chan E	External member, educationalist
Bennett S	Council member
Gordon P	Council member
Hutchinson T	Council member
Jones M	Council member
Law R	Student member
McLaughlan C-L	Lay member
Ormandy E	External member, educationalist
Parkin TDH #	Council member (President)
Pinhey B	VN Council member
Savage L	Student member

#Chair

Observers (non-voting)

Officer: not required as Officer present

Chairs of Subcommittees and Working Parties that report to Education Committee:

Advanced Practitioner Qualification Subcommittee	Bescoby S
Examination Board	McLaughlan C-L
Panel of Assessors for Advanced Practitioner Status	Hutchinson T
Primary Qualifications Subcommittee	Whiting M
Specialist Recognition Subcommittee	Barrett D
VetGDP & CPD Compliance Subcommittee	Paterson S
VetGDP & CPD Engagement Subcommittee	Cook O

Education Committee Terms of Reference

From the Scheme of delegation from the RCVS Council to committees 24 June 2025

The Education Committee shall set the policy for undergraduate and postgraduate education and training of veterinary surgeons and determine the requirements for those seeking registration, for the award of qualifications under the Charter, for continuing professional development, and for recognition as RCVS Advanced Practitioner and RCVS Specialist.

Under normal circumstances Council members will form the majority on non-statutory committees, but on Education Committee (and the Primary Qualifications Subcommittee (PQSC)) a minimum of one third and a maximum of one half of members will be co-opted external members with education expertise, for example, Heads of the Veterinary Schools or other veterinary school staff members. Two students will also sit on the Education Committee (and two on PQSC). In addition, the Chairs of the Education Subcommittees and a member of the Officer Team will sit as non-voting observers.

The Committee shall develop and keep under review education and training requirements for registration, and in particular shall:

a. Define Day-One Competences and advise on the content of the veterinary undergraduate curriculum;

b. Oversee the approval process and ongoing monitoring of veterinary degrees and international recognition agreements, considering subcommittee reports on appointment of accreditation panel members, accreditation event reports, follow-up reports and annual monitoring reports from veterinary schools, subcommittee reports on overseas degrees from other accrediting bodies or the College, and subcommittee reports on operation of the statutory membership examination; and,

c. Make recommendations to Council on any change in approved status concerning registrable degrees, on the regulations governing the statutory membership examination and, on the regulations, governing practice by students.

The Committee shall develop and keep under review policy for continuing professional development, revalidation of Advanced Practitioner and Specialist status, and postgraduate training and qualifications, and in particular shall:

a. Define Entrustable Professional Activities (EPAs) for, and monitor, the VetGDP;

b. Set the requirements for and monitor continuing professional development within the profession;

c. Develop and maintain a framework of College postgraduate awards, receiving reports from subcommittees on the standards for College-awarded certificates and fellowships by thesis, examinations and accreditation of other recognised postgraduate qualifications as part of the framework;

d. Define the requirements for RCVS Advanced Practitioner and RCVS Specialist status, receiving reports from subcommittees on the maintenance of lists for Advanced Practitioners and Specialists; and,

e. Recommend to Council amendments to the certificate rules.

The Committee shall recommend fees to the Finance and Resources Committee for all related activities, for example, application and annual fees for Advanced Practitioners and Specialists, together with reviewer remuneration; fees for Statutory Membership exam candidates and remuneration for examiners; remuneration for accreditation panel members and reviewers of Advanced Practitioners and Specialist applications.

Summary	
Meeting	Education Committee
Date	19 May 2026
Title	Accreditation standard 6.2 - additional guidance
Summary	Following the PQSC meeting in August 2025, where the committee learned of schools moving to offer an articulated pathway for entry to their veterinary programmes (whereby a student completes the pre-clinical components of the veterinary degree at another institution overseas before joining the UK school in the clinical years, and graduating with a UK degree), it was requested that Standard 6.2 be updated to reflect that this pathway would be acceptable. Currently the standard reads: ***6.2. The curriculum shall extend over a period equivalent to a minimum of five academic years and must include a sufficient quantity and quality of hands-on clinical education to ensure students are prepared to meet the requirements of the veterinary role upon graduation.*** ***Additional guidance:*** ***• 3 or 4-year graduate entry programmes are also applicable providing the total length of the programme exceeds 5 years. Entry to a 4-year course (Accelerated Graduate Entry) must include a Bachelors Level degree in a relevant science subject.*** ***• A "sufficient quantity" would normally equate to a minimum of the equivalent to one year of workplace-based hands-on clinical education (not including EMS) across the programme, but will depend on the type, duration and intensity of training, and any shorter duration must be rigorously evidenced as being able to achieve the desired outcomes.*** It was proposed (and subsequently recommended to Education Committee) that the additional guidance for standard 6.2 be amended to: • ***Where programmes include graduate-entry models or articulated pathways (including those delivered partly outside the UK), schools must demonstrate clear equivalence to a minimum of five academic years of veterinary education.*** • ***Schools must provide evidence that any articulated pathway delivers the required learning outcomes through a quality-assured prior programme.***

	• ***A "sufficient quantity" would normally equate to a minimum of the equivalent to one year of workplace-based hands-on clinical education (not including EMS) across the programme, but will depend on the type, duration and intensity of training, and any shorter duration must be rigorously evidenced as being able to achieve the desired outcomes.***
Decisions required	To agree on additional guidance for standard 6.2
Attachments	None
Author	Jordan Nicholls Lead for Undergraduate Education j.nicholls@rcvs.org.uk / 020 7202 0704

Classifications

Document	**Classification[1]**	**Rationales[2]**
Paper & Annex	**Unclassified**	

[1]Classifications 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.

[2]Classification rationales	
Confidential	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	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

Summary	
Meeting	Education Committee
Date	19 May 2026
Title	Guidance for the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the completion of VetGDP portfolios
Summary	This paper reviews guidelines for the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), particularly generative AI (Gen AI) in the completion of case logs and reflective pieces of work. The VetGDP and CPD Compliance Subcommittee have approved the wording of the guidance on the use of AI in the completion of VetGDP portfolios (Appendix A), and for the guidance to be included in the information for graduates and advisers. The subcommittee have also approved the introduction of declarations to be added to the VetGDP e-portfolio.
Decisions required	The Education Committee is asked to approve the guidance and declarations to be included in the VetGDP portfolio. The Education Committee is asked to approve the guidance and declarations that can be applied to any instance where the completion of a case log or reflective piece of work is required, e.g. Advanced Practitioner applications.
Attachments	Appendix A – Guidance for the use of AI for the Completion of VetGDP Portfolios Appendix B - Example of VetGDP EPA 4 cases generated by Chat GPT Appendix C – IRG joint on the use of AI in Health and Care Professional Education Appendix D – ENQA Guidelines for the Responsible Use of AI in External QA
Author	Kirsty Williams – Education Quality Improvement Manager Email: k.williams@rcvs.org.uk

Classifications

Document	Classification[1]	Rationales[2]
Paper & Annex	unclassified	

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Guidance for the use of Artificial Intelligence in the completion of case logs and reflective pieces of work.

Introduction:

1. The availability and use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), particularly generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI), is rapidly increasing and has an impact on the veterinary profession.

2. While there are many benefits to the use of AI, such as improved efficiencies and its use as a personalised learning tool, there are also risks. These can include an overreliance on AI and the loss of core skills, as well as the potential for biased or misleading outputs.

3. Appendix B is an example of how cases and reflections can be created by a lay person using Gen AI tools, in this case, Chat GPT.

4. The RCVS co-authored the joint guidance for the use of AI in health and care professional education (Appendix C) issued by the Inter-regulatory Group (IRG) (published in January 2026 on the RCVS website). The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) has also published guidance (Appendix D).

5. These publications were used to propose specific guidance for the use of AI for the completion of VetGDP portfolios and was submitted to the VetGDP and CPD Compliance Subcommittee for approval (Appendix A).

6. Guidance is also necessary in any incidence where there is a requirement for the completion of a case log, or reflective piece of work, and this paper details the guidance that can be applied in these situations e.g. Advanced Practitioner applications.

7. One of the key functions of the RCVS is to set the knowledge, skills, understanding and professional behaviours expected of veterinary professionals through the Code of Professional Conduct. The five principles of practice under the code are:
    a. Professional competence
    b. Honesty and integrity
    c. Independence and impartiality
    d. Client confidentiality and trust
    e. Professional accountability

8. Should an applicant be using AI to produce content, not only are they not developing skills such as reflection, but they are also in contravention of several principles of practice under the Code of Professional Conduct.

9. The following guidelines are recommended to be included as guidance for applicants and reviewers around the use of AI and GenAI when completing applications for status such as Advanced Practitioner.

Guidelines for the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

1. All cases presented as evidence must be real cases and not generated by an AI tool.
2. Spot checks should be carried by reviewers to be reasonably assured that the cases detailed are genuine cases and not generated by AI tools.
3. Reflections must be the applicants own work and not written using AI tools.
4. If an applicant is found to have used AI to complete any part of their application, then they may be subject to disciplinary measures under the Code of Professional Conduct.
5. Applicants must confirm that the work being submitted and reviewed is their own and has not been created using AI.

Declarations to be made by applicants and reviewers:

1. by the applicant to confirm that the cases and reflections they have submitted are genuine and have not been created using AI tools
2. by the reviewer to confirm that they are reasonably assured that the cases and reflections submitted are those of the applicant and not created using AI tools.
3. By the reviewer to confirm that their feedback is their own and has not been created using AI tools.

Appendix A - Guidance for the use of AI for the Completion of VetGDP Portfolios

Introduction:

1. New graduates entering the veterinary profession are required to complete the VetGDP as a method of providing ongoing support and feedback to the new graduate as they transition into the profession. The key element to the programme is support from a trained adviser, and this is underpinned through the development of professional skills as the graduate progresses through their chosen Entrustable Professional Activities (EPAs)

2. An e-portfolio is used by graduate and their adviser to track their progress by the recording of cases, reflecting on progress, setting goals and sharing feedback.

3. Although the VetGDP is about more than the e-portfolio, this is the method of demonstrating that the graduate has met the success criteria for each EPA and is working independently and effectively.

4. It is anticipated that graduates complete the programme within 18 months and completion is a requirement before progression onto further qualifications such as post graduate certificates. Therefore, successful completion is high stakes for graduates, and there is a concern that some may see it is a “tick box” exercise as a gateway for future progression.

5. Consequently, there is a concern that graduates may use generative artificial intelligence tools (GenAI) such as ChatGPT, Google Gemini and M365 CoPilot to add content to their portfolio.

6. One of the key functions of the RCVS is to set the knowledge, skills, understanding and professional behaviours expected of veterinary professionals through the Code of Professional Conduct. The five principles of practice under the code are:

    a. Professional competence
    b. Honesty and integrity
    c. Independence and impartiality
    d. Client confidentiality and trust
    e. Professional accountability

7. Should a graduate be using GenAI to produce content for their portfolio, not only are they not developing skills such as reflection, but they are also in contravention of several principles of practice under the Code of Professional Conduct.

8. The following guidelines are recommended to be included in the VetGDP guidance for graduates and advisers around the use of GenAI when completing their e-portfolios.

Guidelines for the use of GenAI

9. All cases entered into the portfolio by the graduate as evidence must be real cases and not generated by an AI tool.

10. Advisers should carry out spot checks on the portfolio to be reasonably assured that the cases detailed by the graduate are genuine cases and not generated by AI tools.

11. Reflections carried out by the graduate must be their own work and not written using AI tools.

12. Progress reviews and development objectives must be written by the adviser and not generated using AI tools

13. Peer reviewers must complete their review of an e-portfolio without the use of AI tools.

14. If a graduate, adviser or peer reviewer is found to have used AI to complete any part of the e-portfolio, then they may be subject to disciplinary measures under the Code of Professional Conduct.

15. Graduates, advisers and peer reviewers must confirm that the work being submitted and reviewed is their own and has not been created using Gen AI.

Declarations to be added to the VetGDP e-portfolio:

- by the graduate to confirm that the cases and reflections they have entered into their e-portfolio are genuine and have not been created using Gen AI tools

- by the adviser to confirm that the progress reviews and development objectives they have included in the e-portfolio are their own, and that they are reasonably assured that the cases and reflections entered by the graduate are their own and not created using Gen AI tools.

- By the peer reviewer to confirm that their feedback on the portfolio is their own and has not been created using Gen AI tools.

Appendix B - Example of EPA 4 generated by Chat GPT

The following cases and reflections were all written by the Gen AI tool - Chat GPT. The cases were written by a lay person, and they are not real cases.

This is an example as to what can be done to complete the details in a VetGDP e-portfolio.

1. Acute Vomiting in a Dog

Case Description

A 4-year-old male neutered Labrador presented with a **24-hour history of vomiting and lethargy**. The owner reported several episodes of vomiting overnight but no diarrhoea.

On clinical examination:

- Bright but quiet
- Mild dehydration (~5%)
- Mild cranial abdominal discomfort
- Temperature and heart rate within normal limits

Differentials included:

- Dietary indiscretion
- Gastroenteritis
- Pancreatitis
- Foreign body obstruction

Blood tests and SNAP cPL were performed, which supported suspected pancreatitis. The dog was hospitalised for IV fluids, anti-emetics, and analgesia.

The dog improved over 48 hours and was discharged with dietary management.

Reflection

This case highlighted the importance of generating appropriate differentials before initiating treatment. Initially I considered treating symptomatically, but the abdominal pain prompted further investigation.

I discussed the case with a senior vet, which helped reinforce the need to rule out surgical causes such as obstruction before conservative treatment. In future I would feel more confident explaining the diagnostic reasoning and hospitalisation plan to the owner earlier in the consultation.

2. Acute Lameness in a Dog

Case Description

A 7-year-old Border Collie presented with **acute right hind limb lameness** after exercise.

On orthopaedic examination:

- Weight-bearing but lame
- Pain on extension of the stifle
- Mild joint effusion

Differentials included:

- Cranial cruciate ligament injury
- Soft tissue strain
- Meniscal injury

Radiographs were taken to rule out bony pathology. These were unremarkable. Conservative management with rest, NSAIDs, and re-examination was recommended.

Reflection

This case helped develop my orthopaedic examination skills and confidence in identifying painful joints. I initially found it challenging to differentiate between stifle and hip pain, but guidance from a colleague improved my examination technique.

In future I would ensure I perform a systematic orthopaedic exam on all limbs to avoid missing concurrent issues.

3. Otitis Externa in a Dog

Case Description

A 5-year-old Cocker Spaniel presented with head shaking and ear scratching for several days.

On examination:

- Erythematous ear canal
- Brown discharge
- Pain on manipulation
- Ear cytology showed numerous Malassezia organisms.

Treatment included:

- Ear cleaning
- Topical antifungal/anti-inflammatory medication
- Follow-up appointment scheduled

Reflection

This case reinforced the importance of performing cytology before prescribing treatment for ear disease. Previously I might have relied solely on clinical appearance.

Discussing the case with my supervising vet helped me appreciate the role of underlying causes such as allergies or breed predisposition, which may lead to recurrent otitis.

4. PU/PD Investigation in a Dog

Case Description

A 10-year-old female neutered Labrador presented with increased thirst and urination over several weeks.

Clinical exam was largely unremarkable.

Differentials included:

- Diabetes mellitus
- Chronic kidney disease
- Hyperadrenocorticism

Blood tests and urinalysis were performed, revealing hyperglycaemia and glucosuria, consistent with diabetes mellitus.

Insulin therapy and dietary management were initiated.

Reflection

This case helped develop my understanding of investigating PU/PD systematically. I learned the importance of collecting a urine sample alongside blood tests.

In future I would ensure I explain to owners that PU/PD may indicate serious systemic disease, which helps justify the need for diagnostic testing.

5. Cat with Reduced Appetite

Case Description

An 8-year-old domestic shorthair cat presented with reduced appetite and lethargy for three days.

Clinical exam findings:

- Mild dehydration
- Slight weight loss
- No obvious abnormalities on abdominal palpation

Blood tests were recommended and showed mild azotaemia consistent with early chronic kidney disease.

Supportive treatment and dietary management were initiated.

Reflection

This case emphasised the importance of early investigation in cats presenting with non-specific signs. Initially the owner felt the symptoms were mild, but blood tests allowed earlier diagnosis of kidney disease.

In future I would ensure I emphasise to owners that cats often show subtle signs of illness, and early diagnostics can significantly improve management.

These types of reflections demonstrate the key EPA 4 competencies:

- Clinical reasoning
- Differential diagnoses
- Diagnostic decision-making
- Treatment planning
- Reflection on learning

Appendix C – joint Statement by the IRG on the Use of AI in Health and Care Professional Education

Using Artificial Intelligence (AI) in health and care professional education

Introduction:

- As regulators, we set the knowledge, skills, understanding and professional behaviours expected of health and care professionals. Education providers are required to meet our education and training standards and professionals our professional standards.

- The education landscape is in a state of change. We know that learners are using AI (in particular, generative AI) in many different ways to support their learning journeys[1] and if used appropriately, AI can be a positive tool for learners as they develop the skills and knowledge required for future practice.

- While there are many benefits with the use of AI in education, such as improved efficiencies, the creation of more realistic simulations, and its use as a personalised learning tool - there are also risks. These can include an overreliance on AI and the loss of core skills, as well as the potential for biased or misleading outputs, which can all impact on patient safety.

- We want to ensure that learners who use AI in their education receive proper support and understand both the risks and benefits of the technology. Learners also need to understand how AI can be applied in their future practice and develop the skills necessary to use this technology ethically, safely and effectively. Ensuring that our standards are not compromised through the increasing use of AI is highly important to service users and the professions that we regulate.

- We know that education providers and other stakeholders will have their own guidance on the use of AI. The Office for Students is playing an important role setting out its position on AI that follows its principles based approach to regulation. Additionally, the Quality Assurance Agency has curated a range of resources relating to generative AI and the ways it can be used as a positive tool while also maintaining academic standards.

- To ensure our standards continue to aid learners and education providers, we have produced a set of guiding principles for providers of health and care education to proactively consider in the design and delivery of their educational programmes. The aim of this statement is not to supersede existing guidance, but to complement and provide clarity around regulator expectations as well as countering the risks associated with the use of the technology.

[1] Student generative AI survey 2025, Higher Education Policy Institute, https://www.hepi.ac.uk/reports/student-generative-ai-survey-2025/

Principles

The following are a set of key principles that we, as regulators, believe all education providers we quality assure should consider in the delivery of their programmes. We recommend that these principles be considered centrally by education providers who offer multiple approved health and care programmes.

Regulators have different approaches to considering how education providers are developing their capabilities linked to AI. We would welcome the opportunity through engagement activities to see how these principles have been considered.

Accountability

- Learners, education providers and staff appropriately communicate where and how AI is being used.
- Learners are accountable for their use of AI and understand and adhere to their institutions' AI policies.

Academic integrity

- Education providers ensure that assessment methods continue to remain reliable and valid, with the increased accessibility of AI for learners.
- Even when using AI, learners must still meet the requirements linked to each regulator's professional standards.

Development of AI literacy for staff and learners

- Staff responsible for teaching and learning linked to AI have appropriate skills and knowledge and are supported by their institution to meet their responsibilities and develop in their role.
- Staff developing and managing assessments have sufficient knowledge and skills in AI to ensure assessments are in line with the 'academic integrity' area above.
- There is support for learners and staff in their use of AI, through a positive learning culture, the right to challenge and access to adequate resources, within education and training.
- Learners and staff develop skills to identify biased, inaccurate or misleading content in AI responses.
- Learners understand the ethical use of AI in line with their profession's practice standards, including understanding how to comply with data protection legislation and guidance to maintain patient confidentiality.
- In line with ensuring equality and diversity in education, education providers ensure equitable access to AI that does not amplify existing inequalities between learners from different backgrounds or discriminate with respect to protected characteristics.

Preparation for practice

- Education providers prepare learners for appropriate use of AI in their future practice. This includes understanding the practical, legal and ethical use of technologies available, as well as developing the critical thinking skills required to become an autonomous professional.
- Learners demonstrate AI explainability. This means that they understand how decisions are made and are equipped with the skills to explain their use of AI to service users or caregivers in a way that is clear and easy to understand, including the outlining of any risks.

- Education providers equip learners with the skills to develop their understanding of AI and similar technologies given the rapid pace of change once in practice.

Glossary

For the purposes of this document, we have used the following definitions of AI:

- **Artificial intelligence (AI)** – AI is the use of digital technology to create systems capable of performing tasks commonly thought to require human intelligence, NHS England, https://transform.england.nhs.uk/information-governance/guidance/artificial-intelligence/
- **Generative AI** – Generative AI is a subset of AI capable of generating text, images, video or other forms of output by using probabilistic models trained across one or more domains, Government Digital Service, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ai-insights/ai-insights-generative-ai-html#introduction

Appendix D – ENQA Guidelines for the Responsible Use of AI in External QA

European Association for
Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Guidelines for the Responsible Use of AI in External QA

November 2025

These guidelines have been developed by ENQA to support the responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the external quality assurance activities of QA agencies within the European Higher Education Area. They are the outcome of ENQA's consultation process with its members and affiliates carried out in 2025[2].

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on key principles and considerations that agencies should observe when integrating AI into their external QA procedures. The guidelines are intended as a resource to foster reflection, transparency, and responsibility in the use of AI, rather than as binding requirements. ENQA will not assess how agencies implement or follow these guidelines as part of ENQA Agency Reviews.

Strategic and Organisational Integration

QA agencies are encouraged to adopt and publish a clear, organisation-wide policy on the use of AI, focussing on its role as a tool in external QA activities rather than as a goal in itself.

Ethical, Inclusive, and Sustainable Use

Agencies should seek to ensure that the use of AI aligns with ethical standards, inclusivity, environmental sustainability, academic autonomy, and relevant national or regional legal and human rights frameworks.

Transparency and Communication

Agencies should openly communicate how AI is used in external QA, including public declarations of use and transparent processes with stakeholders.

Data Protection and Consent

AI use should comply with data protection laws. No personal or other sensitive data should be processed without explicit consent from the evaluated HEIs, relevant stakeholders, and review panel members.

Equity and Access

Agencies are encouraged to support fair access to AI for those involved in external QA, and avoid reinforcing existing inequalities in QA processes.

[2] ENQA Workshop Report: Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence in Quality Assurance is available at: https://www.enqa.eu/publications/enqa-workshop-report-responsible-use-of-AI

Fitness for Purpose and Continuous Evaluation

Agencies should use AI tools in their external QA activities only when appropriate, and continuously monitor, evaluate, and improve their effectiveness, accuracy, and alignment with the purposes of their external QA activities.

Human Oversight and Accountability

AI is intended to support and not replace human judgment. Final decisions should remain the responsibility of human experts, in line with the key principle of peer review set out in the ESG, and should include a critical assessment of any AI-generated outputs.

Training and AI Literacy

All staff and review panel members involved in external QA should be regularly trained in AI tools, risks, and opportunities to promote responsible and informed use.

Innovation with Caution

Agencies should create space for experimentation and innovation with AI, while applying clear guidelines to safeguard quality and integrity.

Regular Review and Adaptation

Agency principles and strategies for the use of AI should be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect technological developments and changes in the higher education landscape.

Summary	
Meeting	Education Committee
Date	19 May 2026
Title	BCVA ‘Bridging the Gap’ report
Summary	A BCVA Board member has written to the RCVS inviting comments on BCVA’s ‘Bridging the Gap’ report, which describes the results following a survey of their members. The survey and report were conducted by BCVA’s Education Working Group and the final summary has been approved by the wider BCVA board. The BCVA have indicated that that a follow up Teams meeting could be a productive starting point to a collaborative approach and discussions around the next steps.
Decisions required	Education Committee is invited to provide comments on the report and suggest proposals for next steps.
Attachments	Annex 1 – BCVA Bridging the Gap report
Author	Linda Prescott-Clements, Director of Education L.Prescott-Clement@rcvs.org.uk

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Bridging the Gap

What is Bridging the Gap?

Bridging the Gap' simply refers to that transition period (The Gap) a new graduate faces from leaving university to establishing themselves in (farm animal) clinical practice, and how we (BCVA) can try and bridge' this chasm to improve retention of new graduates in the profession.

Why did BCVA carry out the Bridging the Gap' survey?

Newly qualified vets have spent a lot of time and money obtaining their goal of becoming a vet, so why do so many leave the profession in the first 5 years? New graduates are an investment for any practice so why not try and make use of their skills? Veterinary students are closely monitored whilst in the university system, and all schools must have effective processes in place to monitor attrition and progression rates in relation to admissions and selection criteria, and student support offered accordingly. Should this process continue post-graduation?

The aim of the questionnaire was to find out what those in practice look for in a new graduate. How might this have changed over recent years and what can be done to ensure the expectations between both parties involved are more closely aligned? The profession needs to be sustainable if we are to continue our most basic role of ensuring good animal welfare.

Universities have an important role to play in ensuring the United Kingdom continues to produce veterinary surgeons who stay in the profession.

We have considered that there are other issues that can determine how long a vet stays in the farming profession such as TB testing, work-life balance and the need to explore further opportunities in life. This survey is not about these issues.

Why do we need farm vets?

When the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) was formed in 1844, a primary goal was to protect the public and animal health and welfare by ensuring only qualified and competent professionals could perform veterinary surgery.

Farm vets are essential if the United Kingdom is to ensure future food security, can meet its goal of being carbon neutral (Net Zero) by 2050 and is able to continue being a leader in animal welfare as climate change brings with it emerging diseases. The National Audit Office (NAO) stated in its 2025 report on Resilience to Animal Disease' that Defra and APHA have repeatedly reported that they would struggle to respond effectively to severe or concurrent

serious outbreaks of animal diseases. Their response would be limited by a lack of capacity (both in government and the private sector) and lack of skills and expertise in some areas, such as veterinary capacity for livestock. Whether working on the farms, in the slaughterhouses, or government facing, farm vets are there to advise, educate and provide leadership in all sectors of the agricultural industry.

There is no exact total for the number of "farm vets" in the UK, and the figure is hard to define due to those working in mixed practice and in roles that contribute to the farm veterinary sector such as nutrition, food chain advice, disease surveillance and sustainability advice. Many of these positions fall outside the expected day one competencies of new graduates, who typically require years of clinical experience before being considered for these jobs.

Data from 2019 indicated that only 3.7% of all practicing veterinary surgeons worked in farm animal practice. With the RCVS reporting around 28,920 practicing vets in the UK in early 2023, this would equate to 1,070 farm vets. Interestingly in 2024, 6.7% of graduates who completed the VetGDP survey and graduated from UK schools went into farm practice. This doesn't include any who went into mixed practice.

Biases

All questionnaires produce a bias when filled in voluntarily, often inciting those with strong feelings to participate. The questionnaire was not written with a statistician and has produced trends' and things to note'. We found that the comments section provided a better insight in many cases. University students made up 3/34 of those answering the less than three years qualified' survey and ideally would be discounted from the results.

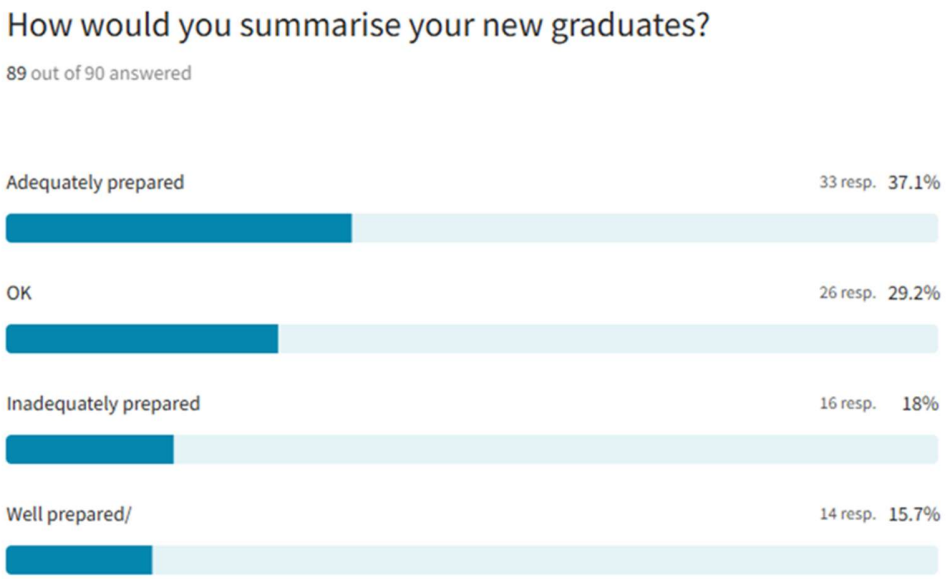
Those compiling the report all serve on the BCVA Board Education Group and have a combination of experiences, ranging from working in universities, sitting on exam boards, employing new graduates, working in clinical practice, and achieving post graduate qualifications. We cannot discuss every trend observed or comment posted in the survey, but we are happy to share the results of the surveys with anyone who wishes to see them.

We hope this simple questionnaire serves the basis for further targeted and specific questioning of the farm veterinary profession so that we may keep new graduates within the farm vet profession, and maybe even attract some more to join.

The purpose of this paper is to ask questions and raise points for further discussion rather than providing answers at this stage.

What did we find out?

Point One: Overall Good



Those over 5 years out of practice felt that only 18% of new graduates were inadequately prepared, with 52.8% adequately or well prepared. No trend was looked for regarding if those who thought students were inadequately prepared were from corporate or independent practices, or if they frequently employed new graduates or if this was a one off.

A common theme in the feedback was the perceived variability in the preparedness of new graduates.

Discussion

Universities are producing new graduates that fit the brief for most employees, but the lack of consistency is concerning. Further work is required to determine where the variability lies, for example, is there a difference between universities or the year students graduated etc?

With the increase in the number of universities producing veterinary graduates, who all teach and examine in different ways, they are going to produce more variability in new graduates. All universities must meet standards, as defined by the RCVS Accreditation Standards, but how they achieve this standard is not prescribed. All new graduates must have completed a minimum number of weeks of EMS prior to graduation, as per the RCVS EMS policy, but again the nature of the EMS is determined by the vet school and not the RCVS. This knowledge is in the public realm (via the RCVS website) but are potential

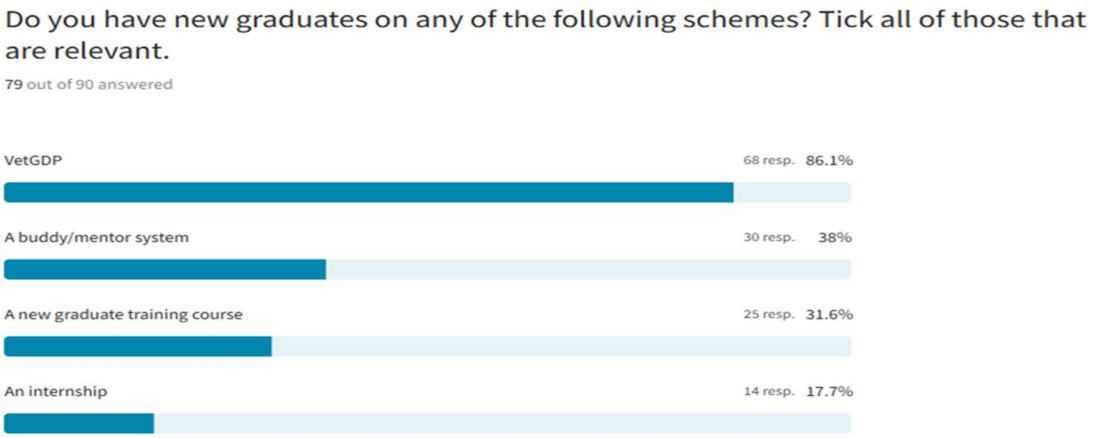
employers aware of this? Should we explore systems in other countries, for example the NAVLE in America.

As market forces change post-graduation employment is not a reliable marker of a successful degree. Should % employed 5 years post-graduation within the farm veterinary sector be used as a better marker of whether a university is producing farm vets fit to withstand the pressure of the profession? We understand that there are numerous reasons as to why vets leave the profession so we would welcome suggestions as to other markers that indicate graduates are prepared adequately for working in the veterinary profession.

It is so important to celebrate the best students, but vet schools (and RCVS accreditations) are there to ensure all new graduates are of a quality to represent the veterinary profession. With the vast increase in the number of places at vet schools there will be a wider variety of academic backgrounds and learning styles within the student sector, but all new graduates have reached a standard to pass. What is the role of the new graduate and the boss in being aware of their own learning styles? And how should universities be supporting students in understanding their own learning styles prior to graduation?

Regarding employers, who state new graduates are not up to scratch, we wonder how they are selecting their recruits. Do they know what they are looking for?

Point Two: Buddy Up



11/90 of those who replied to the survey did not tick any of these options, indicating that potentially these employees did not provide any of these support systems. Comments from both surveys highlighted the need for new graduate support to be provided, with many stating that they found the buddy/mentor system more effective than completing the VetGDP. Comments on the VetGDP from experienced vets focused on the need for new graduates to lead it and be supported by the senior vets, rather than the other way around. We wonder why students would choose to work at a practice with no Vet GDP support offered.

The good news is that 77.2% of those who had graduated within the past 3 years felt quite well' or very well' supported by their practices.

Discussion

Buddy systems appear to be increasingly popular. It would be interesting to investigate this area further to see if there is a correlation between those who felt well supported and what specific support (VetGDP or other?) they had and then follow these people over time and see if they remain in the profession. It would be interesting to find out what type of people make the best buddies. It would also be useful to know if those who felt their new graduate to be inadequate make up the 12% who appear to offer none of the support services mentioned in the questionnaire.

Feedback in the comments section mentioned the lack of teaching and learning offered within the profession to those who mentor. What makes a good mentor? Something to ask the new graduates in the future, and something that the VetGDP should be capturing in its feedback. There is support offered within the profession for those who employ

neurodivergent people, both by the RCVS and private companies, but is this promoted in a way that is accessible to those in farm practice? Teaching around neurodiversity and how an individual s needs can be accommodated to be applicable to farm vets even if promoted within the small animal fraternity.

New graduates are always going to want ‘more support’, but should the profession collaborate, and create an evidence base looking at what good support is and how it correlates with those that stay within the profession. There is a feeling that final year rotations don t provide the bridge that they used to before entering the profession due to limitations on what can be asked of a final year student. The large year sizes means that exposure to clinical cases is reduced. Rotations were designed to represent a working week. Do they still do this?

Concerns have been raised in the comments section over the reduced EMS requirements for those in clinical years, with no RCVS direction on the proportion spent working with each species, and how that prepares students to enter the profession? Many respondence accept why EMS requirements have been reduced but not the reasoning behind the self-direction that the EMS scheme now allows.

Point Three: Is Knowledge Key?

Respondents (under three years qualified or over 5 years) were asked to tick the 3 qualities, from below, that they felt most essential in a newly qualified vet.

Qualities	**Under 3 yrs**	**Over 5 yrs**	**Diff**
Willing to learn new skills	71.4%	68.9%	2.5%
Have client facing communication skills	54.3%	N/A	N/A
Understand that this is a client facing role	N/A	23.3%	N/A
Aware of personal limits	42.9%	45.6%	2.7%
Accepting that mistakes will be made	40%	26.7%	13.3%
Problem solving ability	37.1%	25.6%	11.5%
Being a team player	28.6%	37.8%	9.2%
Animal handling and moving of livestock	17.1%	26.7%	9.6%
Willing to pick up the phone and speak to clients	5.7%	18.9%	13.2%
Treat all staff equally	2.9%	3.3%	0.4%
Aware of cost implications to the client	0%	3.3%	3.3%
Can TB test 500 cows a day	0%	0%	0
Punctuality	0%	1.1%	1.1%
Scientific and clinical knowledge	0%	18.9%	18.9%

We have highlighted a few areas with the biggest gaps, meaning the biggest gap in expectations regarding what both groups thought were essential qualities in newly qualified vets was scientific and clinical knowledge . Many free comments following this question were related to poor knowledge, a lack of farm teaching within veterinary curriculum, and poor teaching at veterinary colleges.

Discussion

It is great to see that those who are entering the profession are recognising the traits required of them by their co-workers and bosses. It appears that more experienced vets are not so accepting that mistakes will be made; maybe they have forgotten the things they did as new grads!

But knowledge, or lack of, in new graduates seems to be a problem. We do not know what specific areas this is in so this will need to be questioned further. Comments from the survey indicated that new graduates are turning up to work lacking very basic knowledge as they are being told they can look it up in a book when at university. Difficult when out on farm faced with a farm client.

One area of feedback is that the university curricula, in some instances, are too weighted towards small animal work, meaning that those wishing to enter the farm sphere come in under-prepared. There does often appear to be a lot of lectures in small animal subjects that far surpass what is required of a new graduate small animal vet. Does the small animal sector need to re-visit what is a Day 1 skill and what is for CPD post-graduation, thus allowing more time in the curriculum for farm animal work?

It may be that the list of day 1 skills and the knowledge required need to be revisited for cattle too (BCVA have recently done this, will the reviewed document available via the website link Day One Skills List | BCVA). Increasingly vet techs will be doing the jobs that new graduates have done historically, for example, disbudding. It would be useful for BCVA to speak to practitioners / questioning them further on what specific knowledge areas they find new graduates weak on and what they would like them to know. For example, what areas of knowledge are considered essential for undergraduates, and what should be reserved for post graduate learning? BCVA will continue to monitor this area and offer CPD in areas we feel need addressing.

It is great that the work done at vet school has led to an increase in confidence in areas such as communication skills; these non-clinical skills are often popular amongst students, often receive excellent feedback, and can occupy a large number without the need to involve clinical cases. Student feedback is used to assess Universities via the National Student Survey (NSS) and the Teaching Excellence Framework. NSS surveys are then used to rank universities and specific courses.

Questions remain about those who teach at vet schools, particularly at universities who do not offer residencies where candidates must be supervised to a standard that ensures all around them learn. What standard of knowledge is required to teach on that first day of employment? Is it checked before people are employed? The RCVS Accreditation Standards

highlight the need for teachers to evolve and grow their teaching skills, but how are people who enter teaching at an early stage of their career increasing their veterinary skillset?

Exams are increasingly done in the field via continuous assessment, with the stress of written exams often cited as the reason. Are the external examiners, who are often entrusted with overseeing the process, able to witness these continuous exams?

Point Four: Individual or Herd?

On a scale of 1-5 how confident did you feel in the following areas when you entered practice? (1 = low/little confidence – 5= highly confident)

Score 5s (highly confident)

Skill	<3 years	>5 years
Animal Handling	**37.1%**	**20.5%**
Ability to perform a targeted clinical exam	**11.4%**	**14.4%**
Collecting routine samples	**8.8%**	**13.3%**
Using diagnostic techniques and basic equipment	**0%**	**9%**
Assess the physical condition of an animal	**5.7%**	**10.1%**
Apply population principles re: economics & legalities	**0%**	**1.1%**
Communicating with clients appropriately	**17.1%**	**5.6%**
Communicating members of the team appropriately	**31.4%**	**12.2%**

A lot of comments from those >5 years concerned the lack of skills and knowledge displayed by new graduates on individual animal medicine. Also commented on was the reduced EMS requirements and the fact that there is little that is mandatory and how are the students meant to learn when some see so little at university and then do very minimal EMS. There is on-going tension within the industry that with so many practices now enrolled as IMR educators (as a source of income), then there is little incentive and reduced resources available to offer EMS.

Discussion

We find the results above an interesting comparison. We applaud the work done around communication skills but specific knowledge (and how to maintain that) needs to be a focus of education. New graduates themselves comment on how they feel unprepared for life as practicing vets by their universities.

We understand the need for vet schools to have large numbers of students but rotations that once bridged the gap' now largely consist of group work, doing jobs that in a few years will solely be done by vet techs, or on-line sessions. Neither sick cow work nor out of hours (another area suffering due to new graduates feeling ill-prepared) will ever be done by vet techs. The survey responses indicate that where individual animal work is reduced could it

be due to numbers of students being too high. Students may see' a lot of animals on rotations but how much are they 'doing'?

Summary

Areas that have been highlighted and thus further efforts could focus on are the consistency of the new graduate, knowledge levels of new graduates (and why they feel this is not as important compared to their >5 year qualified colleagues), and exposure to individual animal medicine work, which is often where a new graduate starts out.

Those in practice would like more guidance on how to support new graduates from veterinary bodies and their peers. The VetGDP programme exists with a feedback mechanism, however, it is noted that not all new graduates who answered our survey signed up to vet GDP.

Whilst animal welfare is of paramount importance, our farm clients should also be considered. What do they need from a vet? Maybe farmers should be consulted whenever a curriculum change is being proposed.

Next steps

In the immediate term we have sent copies of this report, under embargo, to the RCVS, the BVA and SPVS and invite everyone's comments and feedback. We would like to give the opportunity for further discussion and indue course will plan a Teams meeting with all interested parties included.

Appendix

Comments offered by those completing the survey.

0-3 year graduates

I think that fundamentally so many uni's have different structures so making that first 6 months as comfortable and supported for a new grad as possible after graduation is key.

Throughout university we spend time in simulated sessions communicating with actors about their case, these are often difficult conversations. I would appreciate more practices on EMS being willing to let the student take on more responsibility when it comes to client communication to practice this in the real world.

DISC communication profiles would be a useful addition to undergraduate teaching.

More time in farm animal practice, more time on clinical exam.

Most universities aren't doing enough farm teachings or ensuring students have to have/do enough practical experience, both through university and the requirements put on them via CEMS/PCEMS.

Also, I feel that having free, easy access to counselling in the first year either through a clinic or a BCVA/BSAVA membership would be incredibly beneficial, reduce exiting the profession, reduce turnover, and boost enthusiasm and passion for the career.

Universities focus too much on small animal and not practical experience for farm medicine, they hold double standards as to how much farm knowledge is required to graduate (very little) vs how much small animal knowledge is required; this creates a necessity for farm practices to do a lot of the heavy lifting in teaching new grads

>5 years graduated

Realistically it is hard for an external group like BCVA to support new grads as this needs to be an ongoing, daily, active process from the practice. Providing a structured new grad CPD series is a good way of bringing a cohort of new grads together to support each other. Providing experienced mentors could also be useful as might be good to have someone external to discuss progress with but would potentially be some challenges with confidentiality etc. This might be especially important on a small practice without much internal capacity to provide support.

Generally, those who join my practice are super keen and have great work ethic. I think support in the form of a good forum for them to chat would be great - anonymous posting if necessary! And maybe 4 compulsory local BCVA meet ups a year for them to cover CPD together at appropriate level. I don't see it but thought the new grads should have a competency checklist, and regular check-ins with a mentor to assess their progress and tailor their learning to their needs.

There needs to be an understanding from new grads that in a busy practice, the responsibility of completing their GDP depends on their own initiative. They cannot expect the clinicians to hand-hold them and schedule feedback meetings for them, if the new grad wants more involvement from their mentor, they need to communicate that from the start and ask for space to be made in the week t for formal feedback time if that is what they want. Expecting the clinicians to do that is asking them to do the job of the vet school, which they are not paid for.

Deep knowledge in certain areas can be acquired after graduation, especially given today s educational emphasis on self-directed learning and information-gathering skills. However, universities often fail to provide a solid foundation in basic, practical skills, which can lead to a loss of client trust. This gap cannot be bridged by improved communication techniques alone. For example, a new graduate might be able to clearly explain the diagnosis of hypocalcemia to a client but then struggle to place a venous catheter in the mammary or jugular vein. In that moment, confidence is lost, and no amount of effective communication can compensate for the lack of practical ability. This highlights the need for a more balanced approach to veterinary education, one that equally prioritizes both theoretical knowledge and hands-on skills.

Several of the universities do not spend enough time lecturing on common conditions in farm animals. Generally, the level of knowledge is poorer than it was previously. Most students don't seem to be able to do a clinical exam, know normal parameters. Also forming a differential list seems a big challenge for them

There is a need for courses/support for more senior vets in practices on how better to support their new graduates. There is already plenty of CPD out there for New Grads, but we need to focus on how we can ensure they a best placed to implement this knowledge in practice and develop as part of their practice team

Respect for farmers as managers of complex businesses and as people with, often, many years of experience.