BVA, AGV, AVI, AVS, BEVA, BSAVA, BVPA, BVZS, SPVS and VMG response to RCVS consultation on Draft Accreditation Standards for veterinary degree programmes

Who we are

1. The British Veterinary Association (BVA) is the national representative body for the veterinary profession in the United Kingdom. With over 18,000 members, our primary aim is to represent,

   take a keen interest in all issues affecting the profession, including animal health, animal welfare, public health, regulatory issues and employment matters.

2. The following species and sector-specific divisions have contributed to and co-badged this response:

   The **Association of Government Veterinarians (AGV)** is a specialist division of the British Veterinary Association representing the views of vets working in UK Government Departments and Executive Agencies.

   The **Associations of Vets in Industry (AVI)** represents the interests of members working in commercial appointments, primarily pharmaceutical and allied industries

   The **Association of Veterinary Students (UK & Ireland) (AVS)** is the representative body for veterinary students at the nine vet schools in the UK and Ireland. AVS has over 5,500 members, approximately 97% of vet students in the UK and Ireland and represents the views of members at all levels. AVS works closely with numerous organisations including the British Veterinary Association, Veterinary Schools Council and the RCVS to support veterinary students.

   The **British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA).** BEVA serves and leads the equine veterinary profession in the championing of high standards of equine health and welfare and the promotion of scientific excellence and education. BEVA represents some 3,000 members.

   The **British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA)**, which exists to promote excellence in small animal practice through education and science and is the largest specialist division of BVA representing over 10,000 members.

   The **British Veterinary Poultry Association (BVPA)** is an active non-territorial division of the British Veterinary Association. The objective of the BVPA is to further the knowledge of its members, who are drawn from academia, research, government, commerce and practice, by holding educational and technical meetings. The Association also offers objective science-based advice and comment on issues affecting its members and the poultry industry in general.

   The **British Veterinary Zoological Society (BVZS**) is a specialist division of the British Veterinary Association (BVA) dealing with the interests of free-ranging and captive wildlife, zoo animals and non-traditional companion animals (NTCAs). The Society has several hundred active members, including reg

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all circumstances. Whichever way EMS is delivered, it should enable exposure to different veterinary environments and areas of work (both clinical and non-clinical). The offering should rema

1.2 The learning environments across the programme must ensure the health and safety of students, staff and animals and comply with all relevant jurisdictional legislation including health, safety, biosecurity and UK animal welfare and care standards

16. Consideration sho

[age 10 19 research project](#) emphasise the importance of building science capital from early in primary school, and moving away from single-experience initiatives towards longer-term, regular partnership work with young people.

4.2 The school must provide accurate and current information regarding the educational programme easily available for prospective students. The information must include the accreditation status of

4.10 The school must provide students with a mechanism,00008869 0 59)

5.3 An appraisal system for all staff must be in place. The school must provide evidence that it has a comprehensive, effective and publicised programme for the professional development of staff. Promotion criteria must be appropriate, clear and explicit.

75. We support this standard, it is paramount that opportunities for career development and promotion criteria are clear and transparent. We also consider that there should be a requirement for schools to have in place minimum standards, and leadership and management training for all those responsible for leading and/or line managing vet school staff, whether in a clinical or other learning environment.

76. In addition, it is important to recognise that many of the activities undertaken by staff may not fit neatly into the career progression guidelines of the university. For example, many educators spend large proportions of their time engaged in clinical activity. There should be further clarity as to how vet schools should measure and value this activity in relation to career progression.

77. Vet schools should also be required to demonstrate the efforts made by the school to encourage research collaborations between departments within the same school, but also with colleagues across that university.

5.4 The school must support educators by dealing effectively with concerns of difficulties they face as part of their educational responsibilities. Effective processes must be in place to support the physical, emotional and welfare needs of staff.

78. Further guidance is required for this standard to illustrate how educators can be supported in dealing with the difficulties they face as part of the educational responsibilities.

79. In addition, as outlined in our response to standard 4.10, schools should also offer educators a mechanism, anonymously if they wish, to offer suggestions, comments, and complaints regarding

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university and referral practice teaching is not always preparing students for the cases and decision making that they will encounter in first opinion practice [9,10].

84. A greater focus on general practice and primary care roles and the challenges presenting in such roles eg. cost considerations, compliance issues, working in team environments, may assist students as they make the transition into practice as new graduates, with a heightened awareness and confidence in tackling such challenges. This may also help increase satisfaction upon graduation by managing expectations.

85.   Anything more than 50% constitutes

teaching time.

86. While we recognise the need for focussing on casework in the general practice/primary care context, it is important to recognise this standard may have an adverse impact on specialists in vet schools in that it could potentially drive specialists from universities to referral practices and leave the universities relying on generalists to teach students but without having the benefit of the research leadership or post graduate programmes that currently are currently a feature in vet schools (as generalists are not trained researchers or able to teach post-graduates). Therefore, there is a balance to be struck between providing clinical education from both generalists and specialists for undergraduates, such that students have a suitably rounded foundation both in terms of skill set and expectations. To prevent this unintended consequence, consideration also should be given to developing a research basis for general practice and developing parity of esteem for this area of practice as a specialism in its own right.

87. In addition, it is paramount that there are opportunities within the curriculum to better showcase the breadth of veterinary careers available to new graduates. These include non-clinical roles such as government veterinary work, research, academia, public health and epidemiology but also the broad range of other options open to those graduating with a veterinary degree.

88. As well as clinical competences, it is also important to ensure that veterinary graduates have the opportunity to develop a range of non-clinical competences and are prepared to navigate the range and complexity of decisions they will be expected to undertake as part of their first clinical roles (eg. communication, resilience and emotional intelligence).[11] This will also serve to prepare them for the many different career pathways and opportunities that the veterinary degree presents, both clinical and non-clinical.

89. As a competence that spans both clinical and non-clinical skills, ethical reasoning is also an

, clients and their employers. It is therefore important that awareness and training in animal welfare, science, ethics and law (AWSEL) are integrated across undergraduate curricula. Similarly, for the veterinary profession to position itself as animal welfare focussed, awareness and training in animal welfare advocacy at undergraduate level should be strengthened.

6.5 The curriculum must describe appropriate learning outcomes which represent and effectively align the required knowledge, skills, and behaviours of a veterinary surgeon with teaching, learning assessment activities within a cohesive framework.

90. Please see our response to standards 1.13 and 6.4 which are of relevance to this standard.

6.6 Under all teaching situations students must be actively engaged in the case. In the majority of cases, students must be actively involved in the investigation and management of the patient (including practical aspects of diagnosis and treatment, as well as clinical reasoning and decision-making).

91. We support this standard. The additional guidance for this standard should also recommend that students should be actively engaged with the financial aspects of the case, be actively involved in discussing the financial factors influencing decision-making, as well as other client factors such as the ability to give/administer medicatione

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6.7 The programme must give students the opportunity to learn and practise alongside other members of the veterinary team in an holistic manner that reflects the reality of veterinary practice in society.

93. We support this standard. The Vet Futures report notes that it will be essential that undergraduate training reflects the diversity of careers, promotes teamworking, management and leadership skills, appropriate delegation, and is fit for the future. However, it is essential that the additional guidance for this standard recognises that veterinary surgeons will require different management and leadership skills depending where they work and the allied professionals they interact with, and this is not solely limited to the provision of nursing care and the instruction of veterinary nurses. The (non-exhaustive) list of allied professionals and members of the vet-led team can include the following: Registered Veterinary Nurses (RVNs), Official Auxiliaries/ Meat hygiene inspectors, Embryo transfer technicians, Equine dental technicians, Foot trimmers, AI technicians, Farriers, Blood samplers, Groomers, Hydrotherapists, Behaviourists, Physiotherapists, and Animal care assistants.

94. Veterinary surgeons may require a wide range of skills depending on their role and the sector in which they operate. This can include project management skills, people management skills, and an ability to analyse evidence to provide advice and leadership on national or international situations which may affect animal and human populations and large commercial businesses.

95. With the advancement of technology, new ways of working that are likely to become more prevalent in practice should be included in the curriculum. For example, remote consultations will likely become more common practice and this may require modifications to current approaches to case management and an understanding of the RCVS Code of Conduct, students should therefore have a basic understanding of requirements.

6.8 Students must be supported to gain experience which consolidates their learning throughout the programme through the completion of Extra Mural Studies (EMS). This must be delivered in line with RCVS EMS Policy (Annex 2).

96. Specifying the model of delivery for EMS placements (eg, nuis fiwonsulmore

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6.10 The school must have processes in place to ensure students identify relevant learning outcomes on EMS, and record and reflect on their achievement.

108. The additional guidance for this standard could be strengthened by signposting to the AVS Pre-EMS objective setting templates for small animal, farm animal and equine practice,

6.11 The EMS experience should be individual to the student, and they should be able to tailor their experience based on their own learning needs.

109. We support this standard. We recognise that individual students will come to EMS placements with different experiences and have different objectives. It is therefore unlikely that one method of delivery will fit all circumstances. Whichever way EMS is delivered, it should enable exposure to different veterinary environments and areas of work (both clinical and non-clinical). Therefore, the additional guidance for this standard should encourage increased awareness amongst students and EMS co-ordinators about the variety of EMS placements available and breadth of career pathways that can be pursued.

6.13 The school must demonstrate that EMS placements consolidate skills which have previously been taught during the programme.

110. While we support this as an aspirational objective for EMS placements, it is important to recognise that it is often not feasible for all skills to be taught on the course prior to students undertaking clinical EMS placements. Many EMS providers frequently teach students skills that they have not yet been taught, or demonstrate something unusual or specific to their practice that would not be taught at vet school.

111. Effective implementation of this standard would also require increased communication between vet schools and EMS providers so that they know which skills have been taught at each stage.

6.14 The school must develop and implement a comprehensive and robust assessment strategy, at the programme and modular level, which provides evidence that students meet the requirements for progression across the programme and the Day One Competences upon completion.

112. We support this standard. However, expectations of new graduates must be realistic, and assessment strategies should recognise that no graduate can be considered completely omnicompetent on graduation across all species, rather they graduate with omnipotential having been exposed to a broad range of species and areas of work throughout their undergraduate education.

113. Consideration should also be given to establishing feedback mechanisms with EMS providers and future employers.

114. As outlined throughout this response, we strongly support a reconsideration of the way in which students are required to demonstrate their Day One Competences. RCVS should enable students with physical and/or mental health conditions or disabilities to demonstrate competence through reasonable adjustments such as using simulation, or demonstration of competence through direction as is the case in human healthcare education.[12] This will support efforts to widen participation by ensuring equitable access to the veterinary profession for students with physical and/or mental health conditions or disabilities.

6.18 Assessment load should be sufficient to provide feedback to support students' progress, and to evidence achievement, remaining cognisant of workloads for staff and students.

115. We would consider that workload modelling for students and staff is going to be important for successful implementation of this standard and there should be greater emphasis on this in the additional guidance. What constitutes reasonable levels of expectations for student workload through the course, as well as for staff, need to be considered.

6.19 The school must have appropriate moderation processes in place to ensure parity within and between individual units of study, across the programme, with other institutions; and to ensure that each student is treated without bias.

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[12] https://www.gmc-uk.org/education/standards-guidance-and-curricula/guidance/welcomed-and-valued, https://www.gmc-uk.org/-/media/documents/practical-skills-and-procedures-a4_pdf-78058950.pdf

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116.

    individual units of study and _____

6.22 All students must be trained in scientific method and research techniques. All students must have opportunities to participate in research programmes

117. We support this standard, however it should also emphasise that students must have opportunities participate in research programmes and apply research to practice (not just clinical practice).

Definitions and Glossary

Referral/Advanced care: Many specialists work by receiving referrals involving cases of established

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