



# THE ROYAL VETERINARY COLLEGE

## SELF EVALUATION REPORT 2

*prepared for the joint visit of*

**the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons**

*and*

**the European Association of Establishments for  
Veterinary Education**

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## Chapter 1. POLICY STATEMENT

1. The College's overarching policy is set out in our Mission and Objectives, which state that we will achieve and demonstrate international excellence in all domains of our activity, including teaching, research and clinical service. We understand that these activities are fundamentally linked, and true excellence in one area cannot be achieved in the absence of excellence in the others.
2. We practice research-informed teaching. Almost all academic staff participate in scholarship; this includes basic research, which enriches the under-pinning scientific content of our programmes, and clinical research, which helps to ensure that our clinical education is at the leading edge of evidence-based veterinary medicine.
3. Our strategy for teaching quality and standards is spelt out fully in our Quality Assurance Strategy. The Strategy, which is reviewed annually by the Teaching Quality Committee, is designed to achieve the following objectives:
  - i. to assure the quality and standards of the degrees conferred by the College;
  - ii. to deliver high quality taught programmes of study which enable students to achieve their learning objectives;
  - iii. to meet the expectations of stakeholders, including students and potential employers;
  - iv. to satisfy the requirements of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, the American Veterinary Medical Association, and the Veterinary Directives of the European Union for programmes leading to professional qualifications;
  - v. to ensure the implementation of good practice, particularly as represented by the Code of Practice of the Quality Assurance Agency;
  - vi. to review, periodically, the effectiveness of the College's quality assurance procedures.
4. Responsibility for quality and standards rests ultimately with the Academic Board. The Board has delegated responsibility for the assurance and enhancement of the quality of all taught courses to the Teaching Quality Committee. All taught courses report to the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee via Course Management Committees.
5. Student input to academic affairs is through membership of the Academic Board and its sub-committees. Students also provide regular feedback through structured surveys. The College Services Committee provides a forum for staff and students to discuss the enhancement of services and facilities.
6. The College's processes for assuring the quality of its provision has been judged satisfactory in successive visitations by the UK's Quality Assurance Agency for

Higher Education, including a comprehensive audit in 2007-2009 which resulted in the College being judged fit to award its own degrees. The QAA is a full member of ENQA, which complies with the European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance in higher education.



## **Chapter 2. ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS, POST GRADUATE EDUCATION AND STUDENT WELFARE**

### **2.1 UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION**

7. Students apply to study veterinary medicine at the RVC either through UCAS (the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) or, in the case of North American students, through VMCAS (the Veterinary Medical College Application Service). They are assessed to confirm that
  - they have achieved (or are predicted to achieve) the requisite results in high school qualifications (and degrees for graduate entrants), or the equivalent, and in the BMAT where this is required;
  - they have undertaken relevant animal-related experience;
  - they have satisfactory references.
8. Through interview, we confirm that they have the qualities required for success in a veterinarian, including:
  - scientific understanding, reasoning and curiosity
  - reasoning and judgement as applied to ethical and welfare issues
  - appreciation of public health issues
  - communication skills
9. Appropriately qualified foreign students, from both within and outside the EU, are encouraged to apply for a place on the BVetMed. Within the maximum number of students that the College can accommodate, there is no set limit to the number of foreign (non-EU) students that can be admitted. In assessing entry qualifications from overseas, we consult the NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centre) database, the official source of information and advice on the comparability of international qualifications from over 180 countries worldwide with those in the UK.
10. Assessment procedures are developed under the auspices of the BVetMed Course Management Committee, under the leadership of the Head of Admissions, a professional manager with expertise in university admissions, and the Admissions Tutor, a senior veterinary-qualified academic. The results are validated through scrutiny of student progression rates. We are currently undertaking a project, in collaboration with an academic epidemiologist, to identify more precisely the extent to which specific entry requirements may predict the student's probability of success.



**Table1: Assessment admission of students**

|  |                  | 2009 entry                             |        | 2008 entry                            |        |
|--|------------------|--|--------|---------------------------------------|--------|
| <b>No of students applying</b>                           |                  | 1343                                   |        | 1199                                  |        |
| <b>No of students admitted with A levels</b>             |                  | 141                                    |        | 151                                   |        |
| <b>No of students admitted with degrees</b>              |                  | 68 (inc 59 admitted to 4 yr programme) |        | 42 (inc 36 admitted to 4yr programme) |        |
| <b>No of students admitted with other qualifications</b> |                  | 42                                     |        | 35                                    |        |
| <b>% of foreign students</b>                             |                  | EU                                     | INTN'L | EU                                    | INTN'L |
|  |                  | 2%                                     | 12%    | 3%                                    | 10%    |
| <b>Assessment of selection criteria</b>                  | good             | ✓                                      |        | ✓                                     |        |
|  | acceptable       |  |        |                                       |        |
|  | need improvement |  |        |                                       |        |

**Assessment procedures of the performance of enrolled undergraduates**

11. The BVetMed examination system has been developed within the context of the College's overall Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, and is required to conform to the College's overarching assessment regulations. Both the Strategy and the regulations are approved by the Academic Board on the recommendation of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee. The specific Regulations for each Examination require approval by the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee.
12. The timing of examinations is determined by the requirements of the curriculum. The major summative examinations take place as follows:
  - Year One: June
  - Year Two: June

- Year Three: April
  - Year Four: December
  - Final Year: June
13. Different examination formats are used, depending upon the nature of the learning outcomes being assessed:
- i. Written Papers, including:
    - Multiple choice questions and short answer questions, testing factual knowledge and understanding
    - Problem solving questions and extended matching questions testing clinical reasoning
    - Essay questions, testing understanding, analysis, problem-solving, synthesis and critical thinking
  - ii. Practical Tests, including:
    - Objective Structured Practical Veterinary Examinations (OSPVEs)
    - Structured orals
    - Spot tests
  - iii. In course assessments for taught modules (old curriculum only)
  - iv. Project Reports, supplemented by oral defences where appropriate
  - v. Continuous assessment of each rotation.

New examination formats are introduced on the basis of sound principles in the peer reviewed educational literature where possible.

14. The assessment system is validated by the Boards of Examiners. Not only are they required to approve all examination results before they become official, but they scrutinise statistics which identify the reliability of each part of the assessment. External Examiners are included in the membership of each Board of Examiners, and their role includes providing external validation of the assessment process.
15. Any problems arising in the assessment system at the operational level will be identified by the Board of Examiners (including the External Examiners). As a result, changes may be made to the assessment system, via the Course Management Committee (CMC) and the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee (LTAC). Any systemic problems that arise are dealt with through policy decisions taken by LTAC, in conformity with the College's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. Both the CMC and LTAC include student representation.
16. Students are required normally to take each examination at the first opportunity, unless there are extenuating circumstances such as illness. They are given a period of study leave for reflection before major examinations. Students who fail an examination at the first attempt are normally permitted only one re-sit opportunity. A student who fails an examination twice is

required to leave the course, but has the right to appeal, and may be permitted a third attempt, normally after re-taking the year, if there are mitigating circumstances. Students are normally required to pass an examination before proceeding to the next part of the course. Remedial help is given to students who fail an examination.

17. The assessment requirements are communicated to students primarily through means of the relevant Student Handbook.

## **2.2 POST-GRADUATE STUDENT EDUCATION: ACADEMIC TRACK**

18. For each Master's degree, there are clear entry criteria, established with direct regard for the demands of the academic subject concerned. These criteria are established by the CMC, subject to endorsement by LTAC. The entry criteria establish the academic level required, which is normally an Upper Second Class Honours undergraduate degree or equivalent in a relevant subject. For certain courses applicants must hold a veterinary qualification. Prior professional experience may also be required. Candidates must also supply appropriate references.
19. Individuals wishing to apply for a place on a Master's or other taught postgraduate programme apply direct to the College. The admission procedures for UK, EU and non-EU students are identical. Candidates who satisfy the entry criteria may be offered a place by the Admissions Tutor, who is normally the Course Director, an experienced academic with expertise in the relevant discipline.
20. Individuals wishing to apply for one of our advertised PhD Scholarships are required to submit a comprehensive standard application form together with a CV; a personal statement setting out their case for being awarded a scholarship; a copy of their degree certificate; a transcript showing that they achieved at least a 2:1 in their undergraduate degree, or a 2:2 if they also have a Master's degree; and two confidential references.
21. Applicants who meet the selection criteria are shortlisted by the designated supervisor. Interviews are arranged by the Graduate School. Applicants normally have two interviews, one with the supervisor and co-supervisor, and the second with the Vice Principal for Research or the Head of the Graduate School, and a research group leader. The second interview considers applicants against objective criteria aimed at ranking them, which is considered alongside the supervisors' judgements. Offers are made by the Graduate School to the best candidates following consideration of the interview outcomes.

22. Overseas candidates who are not eligible to apply for the College's PhD Scholarships, which are only available to UK/EU nationals, must provide proof of funding when applying. Overseas candidates are also required to submit an application form, CV, degree certificate and transcript, and references, and to have achieved scores of 7 in IELTS or 93 in TOEFL (Internet Based) to demonstrate competence in the English language. The College then attempts to find a supervisor with appropriate subject expertise who would be able to support the student throughout their studies. If an applicant has named a prospective supervisor, the application is referred to the academic concerned in the first instance.
23. Both taught Master's programmes and PhD research programmes are part of the College's mainstream activities. The primary source of finance underpinning postgraduate training programmes is core funding from the HEFCE. For taught Master's programmes, HEFCE has provided funded student places, while PhD programmes are under-pinned by quality-related (QR) funding. Further support is provided by tuition fees paid by the students themselves. Individual PhD students are supported by funding from external scientific bodies, such as the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC).
24. Master's programmes normally last for one calendar year full-time, or the equivalent in part-time study (the latter face-to-face or in some cases by Distance Learning). The training consists of advanced instruction in the relevant scientific discipline; advanced instruction in generic research skills such as statistical analysis; and the completion of a substantial original research project.
25. PhD programmes last either three or four years. They comprise formal tuition in research methodologies, and a major original research project leading to the submission of a thesis. Full documentation of the process will be provided to the visiting party.
26. Each taught Master's programme has its own assessment scheme, approved by the College. In all cases this includes unseen written papers, testing advanced understanding, analysis, synthesis and problem-solving in the discipline; and the assessment of the Project Report, including its oral defence. Students are made aware of their assessment requirements through their comprehensive student handbook.
27. PhD students are assessed on their thesis, including its oral defence, by at least two examiners external to the College: one from another college of the University of London, and the other external to the University. Additionally, the progress of PhD students is formally assessed annually; if the student's

progress is unsatisfactory, and remedial action does not lead to improvement, a student may be asked to leave the programme.

**Table 2: Postgraduate Academic Education**

| Year    | Type of programme                 | Number students enrolled | Number students passed <sup>4</sup> |
|---------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2007/08 | PhD                               | 157 <sup>2</sup>         | 21                                  |
| 2007/08 | Master's (taught) <sup>1</sup>    | 166                      | 71                                  |
| 2007/08 | Master's (by research)            | 0                        | 0                                   |
| 2007/08 | Postgraduate Diploma <sup>3</sup> | 27                       | 5                                   |
| 2008/09 | PhD                               | 158 <sup>2</sup>         | 11                                  |
| 2008/09 | Master's (taught) <sup>1</sup>    | 178                      | 61                                  |
| 2008/09 | Master's (by research)            | 1                        | 0                                   |
| 2008/09 | Postgraduate Diploma <sup>3</sup> | 28                       | 2                                   |

<sup>1</sup>Figures for taught Master's include students registered on linked Postgraduate Diploma / Master's programmes.

<sup>2</sup>Includes students writing up

<sup>3</sup>Distance Learning

<sup>4</sup>The discrepancy between number enrolled and numbers who passed is due to most students being enrolled on programmes that take longer than one year

### **2.3 POSTGRADUATE STUDENT EDUCATION: PROFESSIONAL TRACK**

28. The College offers two professional track programmes for veterinary graduates: one-year Junior and three-year Senior Clinical Training Scholar (CTS) programmes (sometimes known colloquially as internships and residencies respectively). These programmes are available in both the Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences and the Department of Pathology and Infectious Diseases.
29. Clinical training is through the management of cases, under the supervision of specialist academic staff. The large and diverse caseload of the College's hospitals ensures that Scholars are exposed to a wide variety of clinical problem-solving and the management of patients.
30. All Scholars are expected to participate in RVC research activities, including developing a prospective clinical research project allied to one of the College's research themes, and attendance and participation in a range of regular

meetings, seminars, tutorials and lectures is expected. For pathology CTSs, these include a weekly meeting in anatomic or clinical pathology.

31. Senior Clinical Training Scholarships equip veterinary graduates to work at a specialist level in their chosen field. They are designed to ensure that the scholarly activity engaged in meets the criteria for accreditation, and to prepare individuals thoroughly for a specialist diploma examination. It is expected that students will normally register for a Master's degree, the MVetMed, which provides advanced training in disciplines that underpin all branches of clinical veterinary medicine.
32. All applicants must hold a recognised veterinary degree eligible for registration with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, and must have a good level of English: 7 in IELTS or 93 in TOEFL (Internet Based). The majority of Scholarships are advertised, in the *Veterinary Record* and on the RVC website, in early Spring, and start in July, although some programmes may start throughout the year. Applicants must submit an application form; two sealed confidential references; a letter of intent; a copy of their degree certificate and any postgraduate certificates; a certified transcript and any necessary translations; and English Language test results, where relevant. Short-listed applicants are invited for interview at the RVC. Interviews are conducted by the supervisor and at least one other senior academic from the discipline.
33. The four externally-funded Clinical Training Scholarships in anatomic pathology are collaborative and involve formal placements:
  - CTS programme funded by GlaxoSmithKline: placements at GlaxoSmithKline (laboratory animal pathology)
  - CTS programme funded by the Horse Trust: placements at the Animal Health Trust (equine pathology)
  - CTS programme funded by the Horserace Betting Levy Board: placements at the Animal Health Trust (equine pathology)
  - CTS programme funded by Cancer Research UK: placements at the Institute of Cancer, Queen Mary, University of London (cancer models in mice)
34. We have collaborations with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA) for the training of CTSs in Veterinary Public Health. Internationally, we also had joint supervision with the National Veterinary School of Nantes, France, and with the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD).
35. In Veterinary Internal Medicine, residents from the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Justus-Liebig-University, Gießen, working towards DipECVIM-CA,

currently spend two 5 month blocks at the RVC, one in their second year and one in their third year.

36. Opportunities exist for scholars in other disciplines to spend time on placement in other diagnostic laboratories or clinical centres to broaden their experience.
37. Student assessment has three aspects:
- all CTSs are appraised through a common annual appraisal system;
  - Senior CTSs who are enrolled concurrently on the MVetMed or the MSc in Veterinary Epidemiology are required to complete assignments successfully in order to progress towards the award of the Master's degree;
  - those students who are working towards membership of a European or American College are also required to undertake any assessment required by that College.

**Table 3: Postgraduate Professional Specialisation**

| Diplomate title offered | Number of diplomates on staff | Number of Junior Clinical Training Scholars |        | Number of Senior Clinical Training Scholars |        | Success rate |        |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|---|--------|---|--------|--------------|--------|
|                         |                               | 2008/9                                      | 2007/8 | 2008/9                                      | 2007/8 | 2008/9       | 2007/8 |
| DiplECVAA<br>DipACVA    | 5                             |   |        | 4   | 5      | 75%          | 100%   |
| DipECVPH                | 3                             |   |        | 7   | 5      | 86%          | 100%   |
| DipECEIM<br>DipACVIM    | 4                             |   |        | 1   | 2      | 100%         | 50%    |
| DipACVS<br>DipECVS      | 15                            |   |        | 4   | 7      | 100%         | 86%    |
| DipECVDI                | 5                             |   |        | 3   | 3      | 100%         | 100%   |
| DipECVIM-CA<br>DipACVIM | 16                            |   |        | 4   | 6      | 100%         | 100%   |
| DipACVECC               | 4                             |   |        | 2   | 4      | 100%         | 100%   |
| DipACVIM<br>DipACVN     | 1                             |   |        | 1   | 1      | 100%         | 100%   |

|                     |   |    |    |   |   |      |      |
|---------------------|---|----|----|---|---|------|------|
| DipECVN             | 4 |    |    | 4 | 5 | 100% | 80%  |
| DipECVP<br>DipACVP  | 5 |    |    | 4 | 3 | 100% | 100% |
| DipECVCP<br>DipACVP | 1 |    |    | 2 | 3 | 100% | 100% |
| DipECVD             | 4 |    |    | 2 | 2 | 100% | 100% |
| None                |   | 23 | 20 | 1 | 1 | NA   | NA   |

### **Student Welfare**

For full details of the College's policies and procedures, including for the prevention of zoonotic diseases, see SER 1, Section 5.1.5











### Chapter 3. ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING STAFF

38. The College employs rigorous appointment procedures to ensure that new members of academic staff are of appropriately high calibre. Clear appointment criteria are established and published for each post; posts are advertised nationally and internationally to ensure that the widest possible range of qualified candidates is able to apply; only those candidates who meet the selection criteria are invited for interview; interviews are conducted by a panel of experienced senior staff, including the Vice Principals for Research and for Teaching, and an appropriately qualified external member; and as part of the interview process candidates are required to deliver a public seminar on their specialism. Skills training in recruitment and selection is available across the College, and the Senior Management Group has decided that this should – on a phased basis – become mandatory for all those participating in staff recruitment. Full documentation of the academic appointment process will be made available to the panel.
39. The College's policy is that students should be asked to evaluate:
  - individual teaching staff
  - strands, electives and rotations
  - the overall programme and the broad learning environment
40. The College has a comprehensive scheme for student evaluation of teaching and teachers, using standard questionnaires approved by the Teaching Quality Committee, on which there is student representation. In addition, major periodic up-dating of questionnaires is carried out by a working party on which the President of the Student Union Society (SUS) is a member.
41. Strands and Electives are evaluated annually; teaching staff are evaluated either annually or biennially, depending upon the results of their previous evaluation, except that new staff are always evaluated annually during their first three years' teaching (where eligible i.e. teaching three or more sessions on one strand or elective). Students normally complete questionnaires at the end of a lecture, and response rates are considered good. Questionnaires have been found to be less successful in gathering student feedback on clinical rotations, and the College therefore holds an annual "Rotation Feedback Forum" on an evening shortly after the end of rotations, at which Final Year students give structured feedback on each rotation. Students are also invited to provide feedback on rotations via the College's VLE; this feedback is reviewed monthly by two members of the Teaching Quality Committee and the Vice-Principal for Academic and Clinical Affairs.
42. The assessment of individual staff does not result in a single grade, but in a profile across a number of categories. Those who achieve the maximum grade in all, or almost all categories, are rated "excellent"; those who receive a grade

of unsatisfactory in at least one category are required to explain what they will do to improve the situation. The respective figures for the last two years are:

| Year    | % excellent | % with one or more low scores |
|---------|-------------|-------------------------------|
| 2007/08 | 49%         | 12.5%                         |
| 2008/09 | 61%         | 15%                           |

43. The overall scheme for the assessment of teaching staff, across all domains of their activity, is determined by the Senior Management Group of the College, under the guidance of and implemented by the professional staff of the Human Resources Department.
44. In addition to evaluation by students, academic staff participate in a scheme of peer observation of teaching which, as described in SER1, is being rolled out with effect from the current academic year.
45. Before they are confirmed in post, new academic staff undergo a three-year probation period during which they are assessed annually on their teaching, research and administration. During this time they must demonstrate an acceptable standard of performance in all these domains.
46. Once they are confirmed in post, academic staff continue to be appraised annually according to the following:
  - i. teaching responsibilities, goals and achievements;
  - ii. scholastic progress including publications, contributions to the scientific literature and relevant contributions to the media;
  - iii. research grants and contracts applied for or awarded;
  - iv. scope, quantity, and value of all professional services provided;
  - v. administrative service and any other relevant contributions to College, University, professional bodies and national affairs;
  - vi. 'private practice' and other extra mural activities (e.g. broadcasting, professional committees)

The appraisal process assesses the teacher's achievements during the previous year and sets objectives for the following year.

47. Excellence in teaching and assessment is an important factor in promotion decisions for all staff for whom teaching is a significant element of their responsibilities. Judgements are based upon student feedback, feedback from line managers and peers, documentation of achievement, and interview performance.
48. In addition to promotion, staff may be rewarded for excellence in teaching through receiving one of the six Jim Bee Educator Prizes, awarded annually and carrying a sum of £1000 each.

49. The College takes several measures to improve individual teaching qualifications. It is compulsory for new academic staff, unless they already have significant experience, to complete an initial lecturers' course, either the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice run by King's College London's Learning Institute (KLI); or the Postgraduate Certificate in Medical Education at the University of Bedfordshire. The latter course is recommended for staff whose teaching is predominantly clinic-based. Attendance at an in-house training course in communication skills facilitation is also compulsory for all new academics.
50. Staff are expected to participate in staff development (CPD) activities to improve their teaching. The College, through the HR Department, runs a programme of workshops designed to develop proficiency in basic techniques in teaching and assessment, and to develop new skills in contemporary pedagogies. Staff can also receive funding to attend CPD activities outside the College.
51. RVC academic staff also have a unique opportunity to enhance their teaching qualifications through the UK's first Master's and Postgraduate Diploma in Veterinary Education, introduced in 2009/2010. This is designed to enable staff to continue developing their skills and knowledge in a structured way after completion of their compulsory Postgraduate Certificate course. Ten students, all of them RVC staff, have enrolled in the first cohort on the Diploma part.
52. The College encourages all academic staff to become Fellows of the HEA, and pays the membership processing fee and an annual supplement of £500 to staff who become members either through successfully completing the accredited courses at King's College or the University of Bedfordshire, or through the individual entry route for experienced staff.





#### Chapter 4. ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

53. For each major area the College has an explicit statement of Strategy, i.e. the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy; the e-learning Strategy; the Estates Strategy.
54. The assurance of learning opportunities falls within the remit of the Teaching Quality Committee (TQC), which reports to the Academic Board. The TQC achieves this through the following process: all courses undergo validation by a panel including internal and external experts before they are offered; each strand, elective and clinical rotation is reviewed annually; each year of study is reviewed annually; and the whole course is subject to comprehensive review, again by a panel comprising both internal and external experts, once every five years (Quinquennial Review). This process is outlined more fully below (Chapter 5) and described in detail in the QA Handbook.
55. Additional structures are in place to assess, assure and promote the quality of specific aspects of the learning environment:
  - i. the IT Strategy Group has a remit to ensure that the College's digital infrastructure, underpinning the learning environment, is robust and fit for purpose;
  - ii. the College Services Committee has a remit to consider all College-wide services including those underpinning the learning environment, namely the Learning Resources Centres and related services provided by the Library and Information Services Division (LISD); the e-media Unit; and the physical estate, including teaching facilities;
  - iii. the Student Support Committee has a remit to assess and promote the services provided in support of student well-being, namely
    - housing
    - Financial Advice and Hardship Funds
    - Counselling
    - Learning Support
    - Occupational Health
    - Disability Services
    - Careers Service
    - Services for International Students
    - Chaplaincy Service
56. Each of the operational units responsible for aspects of the learning environment is required to report regularly on the discharge of its duties to the Academic Board or the Senior Management Group, which assesses whether the objectives are being achieved.
57. Student involvement in assessing and assuring the quality of learning is two-fold: there is student membership of all committees involved; and formal feedback on all learning opportunities is sought via structured questionnaires.



## **Chapter 5. ASSESSMENT OF TRAINING PROGRAMMES AND THE AWARD OF THE TITLE OF VETERINARY SURGEON**

58. The learning outcomes of the BVetMed degree are developed by the teaching staff under the auspices of the Course Management Committee. These learning outcomes include the specific achievement by graduates of the Day One competencies promulgated by the RCVS. Their development also takes explicit account (as required by the RVC's procedures for all courses) of the QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Veterinary Medicine. The learning outcomes, together with all other key aspects of the programme, are recorded in the "programme specification", as required by the QAA. Because the BVetMed is a fully integrated programme, the elements are not credit-rated individually, but if a student who had successfully completed part of the programme at another veterinary school wished to transfer into the programme and claim credit for part achievement, this would be reviewed carefully on a case-by-case basis.
59. As outlined in Chapter 4, all programmes of study are subjected to a rigorous validation process. This requires the course proposers to present the rationale, learning outcomes, content and assessment of the programme for scrutiny and approval by a panel, formed by the Teaching Quality Committee, comprising two internal and two external experts, the latter with specific subject knowledge. The panel scrutinises the details of the proposed course; inspects the learning facilities which will support the course; and interrogates the managers and academic staff who will be responsible for its delivery. Following this scrutiny, the panel recommends to the Academic Board, via the Teaching Quality Committee, whether the programme should be approved.
60. Also as outlined in Chapter 4, all programmes of study are subject to review on a five-yearly cycle ("Quinquennial Review" - QQR). The core purposes of this review process are to assess the quality of the course, and to confirm that the award to which it leads is of the appropriate standard. Review panels include at least two external members who between them are expected to have expertise both in the subject area and in the delivery of courses at the relevant level. Where appropriate, external members are drawn from outside the UK; for instance, for the previous QQR of the BVetMed the panel included the Dean of the veterinary school from the University of California at Davis. For the QQR of the BVetMed in 2009, three externals were involved, reflecting the scale and complexity of the task. They were Professor Philip Duffus, a former Dean of the veterinary school at the University of Bristol; Professor David Noakes, a former Chair of the RCVS Education Committee; and Professor Bill Reilly, a Veterinary Public Health expert who is President of the British Veterinary Association. The review panel scrutinises a self evaluation report prepared by the programme team; considers proposed changes to the course; meets senior managers and academic staff responsible for the course; consults students, graduates and employers; and inspects learning resources. The review results in a report and recommendations that are submitted to the Academic Board.

61. As outlined in Chapter 4 above, the College carries out course monitoring through two primary methods:
  - i. systematic monitoring through formal module reviews and annual reports.
  - ii. continuous monitoring of feedback data from students, graduates and employers, and External Examiners.
62. A formal process of strand and module review, through which staff evaluate how well a module has run and propose improvements, applies to all undergraduate programmes. The outcomes of this review feed into annual reports prepared by the Year Leaders or Phase Leader which are then considered by the BVetMed Course Management Committee. The annual reports also contain quantitative data and qualitative commentary, and an Action Plan to be carried out during the subsequent year.
63. Students give structured feedback on all Strands, electives and rotations. In addition, they complete a biennial student satisfaction survey that encompasses every aspect of their learning opportunities. All committees concerned with the veterinary training programme, excluding the Board of Examiners, include student representation. Student representatives are elected by the student body, and attend an annual training event to give them the knowledge and skills to be an effective representative.
64. Evaluation by current students is supplemented by feedback from graduates, both six months after graduation, and then again between three and five years after graduation, when they are likely to have a more objective evaluation of the value of aspects of the programme. Employers of the College's graduates are also asked to evaluate the programme, with particular emphasis on the extent to which the graduate demonstrated Day One Skills, six months after graduation.
65. The teaching and learning strategy employed in the delivery of the programme is strongly focused on developing the students as independent, life-long learners. For this reason the didactic, lecture-based approach has been reduced, in favour of an emphasis on problem-solving in small groups, tutorials, and private study. The College continues to promote lifelong learning even after the students graduate. All RVC graduates are eligible to join RVC4life, a free on-line service which the College provides for its alumni. Among the benefits of RVC4life are access to past lecture notes, podcasts and key videos for the first year after graduation; discounts on textbooks; and subsidised CPD. The College encourages all its graduates to enrol on the College's comprehensive range of CPD courses, and particularly to participate in the CertAVP. The College also offers a range of Clinical Training Scholarships and PhD studentships, and a range of specialist Master's degrees, all of which recruit significant numbers of RVC graduates. The College currently has 50 registered PhD students who are RVC graduates.





## **Chapter 6. ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE FOR CLINICS, LABORATORIES AND FARM**

### **Clinical area**

66. In the College's clinical services we operate a comprehensive quality assurance process that demonstrates our commitment to and progress in monitoring and improving quality. For every aspect of the clinical services we have:
- clear policies;
  - standard operating procedures;
  - an audit system for monitoring performance against the standards;
  - reporting and investigation systems for incidents and complaints;
  - regular morbidity and mortality reports and meetings to review how improvements can be made.
67. Patient safety and quality of service is at the centre of everything that we do. We have a culture of everyone accepting individual responsibility rather than a blame culture, which ensures that all staff feel comfortable highlighting issues so that they can be investigated and resolved to continuously improve standards and quality. A full complement of supporting documents setting out the quality assurance procedures for the clinical services will be available during the visit.
68. All the College's clinical facilities (except the Farm Animal Hospital, whose in-patient caseload would not justify it) are accredited to RCVS Tier 3 status.

### **Laboratory diagnostic services**

69. In the laboratory diagnostic services, quality control (QC) is carried out within each lab on a regular basis; within each run, each day or periodically depending on the requirements of the individual laboratory discipline and the particular test. The standard operating procedures (SOPs) that are in place for each laboratory include the action to be taken when reviewing the results, whether the results from the relevant run should be accepted and reported, or whether the test has failed and it should be re-run, possibly following remedial action. The QC results are monitored immediately and periodically to monitor a test's performance over time. This will pick up any natural deterioration that may occur due to reagents or equipment even though the results are within acceptable limits, so routine maintenance can be carried out before the quality falls outside these limits.

70. In addition to the QC, the laboratories take part in the following quality assessment (QA) schemes:
- Biochemistry: Randox International Quality Assessment Scheme
  - Endocrine: Society for Comparative Endocrinology Quality Assurance Program
  - Haematology: UK National External Quality Assessment Service (NEQAS) – Haematology
  - Histology: UK NEQAS for Cellular Pathology
  - Laboratory Animal Diagnostic Services: The Laboratory Health Monitoring Club
  - Microbiology and Parasitology: Veterinary Laboratories Agency, QA Unit
71. QA samples are received, run with routine samples and reported to the scheme organiser who then provides information on how the results compare with the mean and standard deviation of the results from other laboratories in the UK. Where possible the comparison is with results from the same equipment and/or method used in the College.

### **Farm facilities**

72. The arrangements for quality assurance pertaining to the College Farm at Boltons Park are two-fold. First, the Farm participates in a number of national “Farm Assurance” schemes that are relevant to different areas of the enterprise, namely:
- The Assured Dairy Farm Scheme, administered by Cmi. This is an accreditation scheme which accompanies our milk supply to ARLA, a standard required to join the ASDA producer group.
  - FABBL - Farm assurance for beef and lamb production. This entitles the College to use the “Little Red Tractor” logo.
  - Traditional Farm Fresh Turkey Association. EU Traditional Speciality Guaranteed and we can also market birds under the Golden Promise label.
  - CHeCS – Cattle Health Certification Standards (UK). Accredited BVD Free Unvaccinated status.
73. Second, the senior academic staff member with responsibility for the Farm reports to the Senior Management Committee biannually. This report incorporates data on both productivity and morbidity, and provides the basis for decisions about initiatives to further improve the quality of the Farm.







## Chapter 7. ASSESSMENT OF CONTINUING EDUCATION

74. The College's arrangements for assuring the quality of continuing education (CPD) are two-fold, differing between those for non-award bearing CPD, and the award-bearing RCVS Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice (CertAVP).
75. The primary purpose of providing non-award bearing CPD is to meet the needs of the profession for continuous up-dating. The primary vehicle for assessment of these courses is therefore evaluation by the participants. All courses, both face-to-face and on-line, are evaluated by the established method of participant questionnaires. The results of these are analysed by the RVC's Director of Professional Development, and the results are used to identify improvements in the course (if it is to be offered again), and to inform the planning of other courses. The list of courses offered in 2009, together with their assessment by the participants, will be provided to the visiting party, in strict confidence, during the visit. The overall programme of non-award bearing CPD, including the quality assurance processes, is overseen by a Course Management Committee on which there is representation of the profession.
76. Because the CertAVP leads to an award, the quality assurance processes parallel those for other courses. The programme was subjected to rigorous initial validation, and will be subjected to a full Quinquennial Review, with external experts on the review panel, after it has been running for five years. Assessment of student performance is conducted under the auspices of a Board of Examiners, which includes External Examiners. The CertAVP is overseen by a Course Management Committee.
77. There is no legal requirement for Veterinary Surgeons in the UK to undertake CPD. However, CPD is the personal obligation of all responsible veterinary surgeons and the minimum CPD recommended is 105 hours over three years with an average of 35 hours per year, although most veterinary surgeons do considerably more than this.



## Chapter 8. ASSESSMENT OF RESEARCH

78. The regular quality assurance process for research is focused on reports by the Vice Principal (Research) to the Senior Management Group (twice-yearly) and to the Academic Board (termly). These reports include key performance indicators:
- grant income
  - publications
  - PhD studentships
  - awards
- Copies of these reports will be made available to the visit party.
79. The key external audit of the College's research quality is the periodic UK-wide Research Assessment exercise (RAE), which last took place in 2008 and in which the RVC's research performance was rated second among the UK veterinary schools. In addition to the performance indicators noted above, the RAE also measured the esteem in which the RVC's research is held, and the overall research environment of the College. In preparation for the RAE the College held, and continues to hold periodically, "mock RAEs" in which the Research Office audits performance against the criteria used in the RAE, with particular emphasis on the audit of staff publications. The Vice Principal for Research also meets each member of research academic staff annually to discuss their current and planned publications and to explore ways in which their impact on the end user can be maximised. The College has produced a series of podcasts highlighting current research activity, which is available via the iTunes website, as a means of communicating our research more widely.
80. The College's strong research base provides the under-pinning for the extensive PhD programme available. As indicated in SER1, in 2009/2010 the number of research student places available is 130, excluding those writing up.
81. In respect of veterinary undergraduate training, the system for research to feed into the curriculum is four-fold:
- the annual process of Strand review is used to ensure that the course content continues to incorporate the latest relevant scientific advances;
  - the Elective modules in the Final Year are designed to be outside the core curriculum, and hence incorporate specific content from staff research programmes;
  - the Professional Studies Strand incorporates specific instruction in research methodology;
  - as detailed in SER1, students are required to undertake two research projects, the second of which lasts at least eight weeks and is designed to facilitate the completion of a substantive piece of original research with a view to possible publication.
82. In addition, in relation to the current revision of the BVetMed curriculum, one of the instructions to all Year and Strand Leaders was that "great stories in

science" were an intended theme to be preserved alongside essential underpinning knowledge and Day One skills.

83. Research is a key criterion in respect of staff promotion. Unless a staff member is appointed to a "teaching only" role, then the objectives against which they are judged in order to be confirmed in post at the completion of their probationary period will include measures of research performance, including grant income and PhD students supervised. In order to gain promotion, academic staff will be required to demonstrate continuing high quality performance against all research parameters. In respect of the small number of staff in "teaching only" roles, noted above, promotion will require the post-holder to demonstrate high quality engagement with the scholarship of teaching and learning.







## **Chapter 9. ASSESSMENT OF INTERNATIONALISATION OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH**

84. The College has a developing International Strategy under the leadership of the Vice Principal (Strategic Development and International). Globalisation forms a significant plank of the College's Corporate Plan for 2009/2013. The College recognises that, as one of the larger veterinary colleges, it has a particular responsibility to contribute to the development of veterinary education and science worldwide.
85. In respect of undergraduate education, students are encouraged to undertake Extramural Studies placements and research projects outside the UK. We have progressively extended the amount of overseas EMS permitted to nine weeks, which we judge to be the maximum that can reasonably be permitted if students are to meet the essential requirements for practice in the UK. In respect of collaboration with developing countries, the College supports the Undergraduate Research Team, which undertakes a biennial expedition, focused on a topic related to veterinary research and animal health, in a developing country. Development education also forms an innovative component of the Professional Studies Strand of the new BVetMed curriculum, through a programme supported by the UK Government's Department for International Development (DfID). The College does not currently participate in Erasmus because of our limited capacity to accommodate students beyond our regular intake. However, when students from other EU countries approach the College directly we consider them on a case-by-case basis. We anticipate that the introduction of Tracking will open up new opportunities in this respect, and given renewed interest in Erasmus among our academic staff we are reviewing our position. It should be noted that we have students from other EU countries in all years of the BVetMed.
86. At the taught postgraduate (Master's degree) level, the College's focus is on securing scholarships that enable students from developing countries to study in the UK. We have had two or more Commonwealth Scholarships for each of the last nine years, to fund places on any MSc. We have also had a BBSRC Masters Grant for Veterinary Epidemiology for the last three years (four scholarships per year).
87. The College's Clinical Training Scholarship programmes are open to students from veterinary schools worldwide. The Senior Clinical Training Scholar programme recruits particularly strongly from EU states outside the UK, although the College will normally consider applications only from graduates of EAEVE-accredited schools, in line with EBVS recommendations.
88. When filling academic staff vacancies, the College recruits the best applicants irrespective of origin (subject to satisfying UK law). As part of its policy of internationalisation, the College has sought applicants from outside the UK.

The current academic staff profile includes staff from 25 countries, of whom 33 staff are from EU countries other than the UK, and 24 are from outside the EU.

89. Trans-national research collaboration forms the final plank of the College's international strategy. The College's policy is to participate actively in EU research programmes. The College also promotes participation in research programmes in developing countries. A list of the College's collaborative trans-national research programmes, including current EU-funded research activities, will be provided to the visiting party.





## **Chapter 10. ASSESSMENT OF COOPERATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS AND SOCIETY**

90. The College publishes a series of Prospectuses that provide prospective students with objective information about RVC study programmes and the College as a whole. The College is also required to publish an Annual Report. These will be made available to the visiting team.
91. The College meets the requirements of the UK's Freedom of Information Act, and has an approved publication scheme under which a comprehensive range of information about the College and its study programmes is accessible via the college website.
92. At the national level, the College is required, in common with other publicly-funded HEIs, to make quantitative data demonstrating programme quality available on the official "Unistats" website, [www.unistats.com](http://www.unistats.com).
93. The College has an active alumnus association. It also employs a staff member with responsibility for maintaining contact with alumni. The College maintains contact with its alumni through a number of means, most significant of which is the magazine "Eclipse", copies of which will be made available to the visiting team. As indicated in paragraph 65 above, the College has established RVC4life, in parallel to the Alumnus Association, as a vehicle for providing graduates with on-going benefits relevant to their professional activities.

