

UK-VET Equine

Editorial Board

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Veterinary education during COVID-19

The SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) pandemic has presented significant challenges to us all, locally, nationally and internationally. It has affected all our working practices and the lives of our colleagues, clients and patients. Working at the Royal Veterinary College Equine Referral Hospital I am also seeing the huge effect the pandemic is having on the education of our veterinary students. Lectures have moved online, with onsite practical components of the course adjusted to fall in line with social distancing requirements. A significant amount of work has been undertaken by those in veterinary education, in a very short space of time, to provide as innovative, rich and engaging material as is possible online.

In the Equine Referral Hospital, the current final year students have missed out on 6 months of on-site rotations between March and September, so these students now join those intended to be on rotation now. As a result, there are more students on rotation at once. This, combined with the requirement that group sizes be reduced to facilitate social distancing in the clinic rooms, means that students are spending less time in the clinic overall. Further online case material has been provided but we are under no illusions that there is any real substitute for contact with clinical cases. That being said, I have been overwhelmed by the maturity our students have shown and their eagerness to benefit from the practical experiences that are available.

Under RCVS regulations students are usually required to complete a minimum of 38 weeks of extramural studies during the course; 12 weeks on preclinical placements and 26 weeks of clinical placements. In response to the pandemic, the RCVS Council has agreed to temporarily suspend its EMS requirements for UK veterinary students. While on the one hand, this will be of some comfort to students whose EMS placements have been cancelled, on the other hand, students are all too aware of the impact this will be having on the development of their practical and professional skills. We are thankful that many practices still feel able to offer EMS placements to students in COVID-secure environments.

As these students work towards and beyond graduation it is up to us all to foster their education and professional development. To this end, I'd like to reiterate James Crabtree's plea in the previous issue's editorial for you to contribute to the BEVA initiative 'What I wish I'd known' at <https://www.beva.org.uk/Vet-Graduates/Top-tips-for-new-graduates>.

This is another way in which, as a community, we can all help to minimise the impact of the pandemic on our future veterinary surgeons. **EQ**



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