

LIVE

NEWS 2013

**RVC** Royal  
Veterinary  
College  
University of London





LIVE grew out of the last major teaching-related special funding initiative in the UK, first conceived nearly ten years ago. This created, in January 2005, 74 CETLs (Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning!) across 54 different Higher Education Institutions, at a cost of £315 million spread over five years. It was therefore disappointing, in March 2012, to read the headline in Times Higher Education: “CETLs’ impact assessed; the sector hardly felt a thing” based on the English Funding Council’s own report on its CETL programme. This is hardly the sort of conclusion that encourages governments and other funders to engage in further initiatives of this type!

The CETL programme was established with the aims of “improving practice” and “rewarding pedagogic excellence”. However, the government’s original discipline-focused proposal to build on best practice in areas so identified by Subject Review was quickly pulled in various different directions by interest groups focused on more generic approaches to curriculum and staff development. Many CETL directors were left struggling to understand how generic educational themes could be applied across large, multi-faculty institutions and successfully embedded in a meaningful way at faculty and departmental levels.

Readers will not be surprised to know that my conclusion, in relation to LIVE’s activity, is rather different. Perhaps we were saved by the fact that our Centre, focused on independent and lifelong learning skills, was created in a specialist institution dedicated to educating the veterinary team – veterinarians, veterinary nurses (technicians) and animal scientists. This meant that LIVE was always going to have a discipline emphasis, and that it was logical to reach beyond the Royal Veterinary College (RVC) to build networks of like-minded educators in the rest of the UK and overseas. This has meant that I have been privileged to work with an inspiring and growing group of individuals who are passionate about veterinary education at the RVC and elsewhere, to the ultimate benefit of our students, all the animals with which we deal, and their owners, which is the reason why our veterinary schools exist.

The LIVE team, with others, has produced new modules, methods of delivery and modes of assessment, as well as focusing on “the last piece of the jigsaw”, the educators themselves. Therefore, looking back, I have to conclude that LIVE is one of the “limited number of institutions” that the report mentions which form the CETL legacy. This “rests in individual staff involved in CETLs and ... institutions that embedded pedagogic research in their courses”, and I hope also, in the case of LIVE, all those, in addition, who have been encouraged to adopt evidence-based approaches to learning and assessment in much the same way as they have always done for their clinical practice and scientific research.

I hope you find further news of LIVE-related activities exciting and stimulating. We welcome feedback and contact from everyone interested in education. As always, I look forward to 2013 with mixed feelings, given continued economic difficulties and changes for the higher education sector. There is much more to do, but whenever I encounter a student or a teacher for whom a new or different approach has made learning so much more meaningful, I realise how essential and rewarding our collective endeavours are.

Stephen May, Academic Director of LIVE



The third annual VetEd Symposium took place from 12<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> July 2012 at The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies, the University of Edinburgh.

The conference continued the great tradition of interesting key speakers, informative poster sessions, interactive workshops and the opportunity to develop new contacts, which originated from the first Symposium – the LIVE Centre Celebration in 2010. The LIVE Centre was well represented in Edinburgh with three poster presentations and a workshop, written and presented by combinations of LIVE staff and other members of the RVC and international veterinary educationalists:

- The development of a checklist of microscopy steps through cognitive task analysis  
Scudamore, C., Kinnison, T., Royal Veterinary College; and Baillie, S., University of Bristol.
- A study on the benefits and issues of participation in an online veterinary professional network 'NOVICE'  
Kinnison, T. Royal Veterinary College; Baillie, S., Bristol Vet School; Schaper, E., Ehlers, J., Hannover, Germany; Mandoki, M., Budapest, Hungary; Ciobotaru, E., Bucharest, Romania; Boerboom T.B.B. and van Beukelen, P., Utrecht University, The Netherlands
- Care and justice orientations to moral decision-making in veterinary students  
Quinn, C., Manor Veterinary Clinic, Kent; Kinnison, T., and May, S., Royal Veterinary College
- Identifying challenges and formulating best practice in supporting international and EU students at vet school  
Davis, R., Dale, V., Totemeyer, S., Royal Veterinary College

Eleven further presentations were given by RVC staff, including Martin Whiting's 'A multiple format cumulative learning structure for veterinary ethics', Katie Adam's 'A review of the role of veterinary education in addressing the shortage of farm animal vets in the UK' and Nick Short and colleagues' 'Wikivet' to name a few.

The keynote speakers were Professor Sarah Baillie (Chair in Veterinary Education, University of Bristol) on 'Putting Veterinary Education Centre Stage', Professor Jean Ker (Professor of Medical Education & Director Clinical Skills Centre, University of Dundee) on 'Using Simulation for Delivering Safe Practice' and Professor Sheila Crispin (RCVS Council) on 'Fitness to Practice'.

A key theme which recurred throughout the conference was the idea of collaboration and sharing. Almost every speaker was asked the question 'will this be available for others to use?' Many presenters were able to answer in the affirmative which is clearly good news.



## 17th Annual Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA) Conference 15th and 16th November 2012

Distance education of teachers presents many challenges, especially when, as with most Post-Graduate Certificates in Education, observation of teaching is incorporated into the programme. At the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual SEDA Conference on Excellence in Teaching, Kim Whittlestone and Ayona Silva-Fletcher ran a workshop on the topic: 'Developing teachers at a distance'. This 90-minute interactive session set out how to plan and conduct a structured teaching observation at a distance, and explored the value of patchwork texts as a part of this process. The workshop started by showing clips from a video of one of our PGCert teachers from the USA running a class on communication skills. The strengths and weaknesses of using this approach were discussed and compared with the alternatives of using live video conferencing such as Skype or being actually present in the room. One feature of the 'record your own teaching' approach allows students to view their own teaching and do a critical self-analysis before getting feedback from their tutor. This was recognised as a major strength by the workshop participants. The process of using patchwork texts to reflect before and after the process by the student and the evaluation criteria of these reflective essays were also discussed. The workshop was well attended with active discussions. Several participants who also conduct teacher development programmes while initially sceptical, were convinced that this could be an alternative approach for them to observe teachers at a distance. The feedback received after the workshop was very positive.

Abstracts from all the presentations and the workshop at the conference are available at:

[http://www.seda.ac.uk/index.php?p=14\\_2&e=427&x=1](http://www.seda.ac.uk/index.php?p=14_2&e=427&x=1)



Veterinary Educator Collaborative, 27-28 July 2012, Colorado

## From Novices to Experts: Supporting Students' Development of Professional Skills

[Programme and Speakers:

[http://www.cvmb.colostate.edu/ns/\\_docs/employee\\_resources/deans\\_office/vec-symposium/vec-symposium-schedule-final.pdf](http://www.cvmb.colostate.edu/ns/_docs/employee_resources/deans_office/vec-symposium/vec-symposium-schedule-final.pdf)]

As US readers will know, the Veterinary Educator Collaborative is the subgroup of the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges focused on educational development and sharing of best practice.

Last year, its summer symposium was organised by Regina Schoenfeld and colleagues at **Fort Collins, Colorado**, around a programme focused on professional skills development that was so attractive that the event was oversubscribed. In addition to a strong North American line-up of speakers and facilitators, Professor Sarah Baillie (University of Bristol) addressed the question "Simulation: the answer to all our problems?" and Professor Stephen May, the question "Clinical reasoning: what it is and how should we teach it?". The programme was packed with short presentations on the fundamentals of learning, different methods of teaching delivery, with innovation in all areas, best practices in assessment, ways of supporting learners, and approaches to inspiring students to engage more in the so-called "softer skills" so essential to professional practice.

Stephen May's trip was made possible by the combined support of Lizette Hardie and Regina Schoenfeld, and this allowed him to visit, in addition, the veterinary schools at **North Carolina State University**, in Raleigh, and **Virginia Tech, in Blacksburg**, where he again led discussions on clinical reasoning and was able to join colleagues in sessions on curriculum design and delivery. A big bonus in Blacksburg was the opportunity to meet two members of the faculty who were enrolled in the RVC's Postgraduate Certificate in Veterinary Education, Jacque Peltzer and David Grant. Distance learning via the internet is an amazing development, particularly as virtual classroom technologies and video conferencing becomes more and more reliable. However, nothing beats an opportunity to meet colleagues "in the flesh" and visit where they work. It allows much more meaningful discussion of the challenges each of us faces in our particular work environments, and I hope gives us all renewed energy to address these!



*Statue at Virginia Tech's Blacksburg Campus of the Veterinary School*



# novice

Network Of Veterinarians In Continuing Education

The 'NOVICE' project (Network of Veterinary ICT in Education) has now come to the end of its three years EU funding, however it will continue!! The six institutions which make up the project team are very keen to keep the project's Web 2.0 site up and running and have made sustainability plans for this purpose, based on the success of the project.

The site now has well over 2,500 members from across the globe. There are more than 160 special interest groups which allow veterinarians, veterinary students and veterinary educationalists to share their thoughts, knowledge and experiences with others via discussion boards, blogs, wikis, bookmarks etc. Three particularly active groups are worthy of note – the Clinical Skills and Simulation Group, the Animal Welfare Group and the ICT Education Group.

Aside from the website, a further success of the project was its conference: NOVICE International Conference – Insights for online professional communities, held at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Bucharest, Romania in October 2012. More than 80 people from around the globe attended the conference and took part in the workshops, short communications and plenary sessions. Three individuals from the RVC attended the conference: Tierney Kinnison presented work on 'NOVICE: Results of the Third Year Evaluation' and 'If you build it, will they come? (Why are some groups less popular than others?)' and Victoria Duggan and Per Karlsson presented 'Impact of lecture recording on veterinary student learning'. The picture below shows some of the delegates in the beautiful Bucharest main hall and the international veterinary students who attended the conference.

The site is restricted to veterinary students, veterinary surgeons and veterinary educationalists; it is free and easy to join, just visit [www.noviceproject.eu](http://www.noviceproject.eu) to register.



Bucharest\_Students



Two students completed RP2 projects under Ayona's supervision.

**Anna Frykfors von Hekkel** studied the dietary requirements of the Asian elephant. To date, there have been few studies into the diet of the captive Asian elephant (*Elephas maximus*) in range countries. This study examined six captive Asian elephants, from two Sri Lankan collections. Anna measured the quantity and quality of the diets and faeces of the elephants and evaluated the nutrient intake and digestibility. She compared the nutrient intake and body condition score of the animals to assess the adequacy of the diets in the elephants in Colombo Zoo and at the Millenium Elephant Foundation in Sri Lanka. The results showed a significant difference in body condition score but no difference in dietary intake between the two collections.

Anna received a British Veterinary Association overseas travel grant 2012 to support part of this study.

**Christopher Snow** did a comparison of behaviour and faecal cortisol metabolite levels in semi-captive orphan Asian elephants, (*Elephas maximus*), before and after reintroduction into the Uda Walawe Nation Park, Sri Lanka. Christopher conducted his study at the Elephant Transit Home (ETH), which is an orphanage on the edge of the Uda Walawe National Park, Sri Lanka. At the ETH, juvenile elephants are reared on powdered milk until they are weaned and released into various national parks across the country. Christopher studied the behaviour of four elephants, at four different time periods and analysed faecal cortisol metabolites from 18 elephants on three consecutive days prior to being released. This baseline was then compared with the behavioural data of two elephants post release and 11 faecal samples collected ten days post release. Christopher developed a behavioural ethogram to analyse the data and showed that there are significant differences in behaviour types before and after release. Christopher received a grant from the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons to support part of this study.



Christopher at the ETH during his project feeding an injured baby elephant. Note the bandaged hind limb.

Two students completed RP2 projects under Kim's supervision.

Hannah Sargeant studied the veterinarian-client interaction relating to obesity in pets. In the field of human medicine obesity is under-reported and advice to lose weight is often not given. Within veterinary medicine, a study in Australia noted that few owners of obese dogs were informed of their pet's obesity.

Hannah's study set out to explore why vets might not talk to clients about their pet's obesity. Hannah observed consultations and interviewed veterinarians in first opinion practice about their experience of talking about pet obesity. She thematically analysed the interview transcripts and identified four main barriers to introducing the topic of obesity in this study:

1. Veterinarians make assumptions about the client which act as a barrier to effective communication (especially if the client is overweight)
2. Clients are often seen as non-compliant because of their weak will and this perception reduces the impact that the vet feels they can make.
3. Vets underestimate the effectiveness of good communication.
4. Vets do not have the skills to tailor their communication style to clients of obese pets.

Hannah concluded that communication skills training of veterinarians does not go far enough in developing the skills of a collaborative relationship-centred approach; one that is seen as particularly effective in discussions about obesity in pets.



Sarah O'Shaughnessy explored the acquisition of informed consent for elective ovariohysterectomy and how this process was influenced. Acquiring informed consent goes well beyond the simple signing of a consent form; its ultimate goal is to ensure that the client has been properly informed and has understood the risks and options available. A wealth of medical research has allowed systematic reviews of research investigating the effectiveness of interventions to the informed consent process. The most effective finding from this medical literature is allowing more time for one-to-one discussions. Research concerning informed consent acquisition in veterinary medicine is currently severely lacking.



In this study, Sarah observed the informed consent procedure at a charity neutering clinic and then performed semi-structured interviews with the vet following the animal's admission. She also interviewed the owner when they returned to collect their pet. Four vets (A-D) and seven clients (1-7) were interviewed. Sarah was then able to compare what was discussed in the admission consultation with what the client recalled later on. One of these comparisons is shown below and proved particularly interesting.




Communications about risk varied between veterinarian and consult [table 1]:

- All veterinary surgeons consistently specified the presence of an 'anaesthetic risk', immediate surgical risks such as 'bleeding' and multiple short term risks of the procedure such as 'infection', 'swelling' and 'wound breakdown.'
- Only 2 veterinarians in 3 consultations specified that the worst outcome of general anaesthesia could be death.
- No other risks of general anaesthesia were specified
- A bias towards the immediate and short term risks opposed to those of the long term was observed

Table 1: Risk communication during admittance consultation

Veterinary surgeon	A	B	A	C	B	D	D
Client	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
'General anaesthetic risk'	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present
Risk of death during anaesthetic specified	Absent	Present	Present	Absent	Present	Present	Absent
Immediate surgical risks e.g. bleeding	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present
Short term risks e.g. infection and wound breakdown	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present
Long term risks e.g. weight gain or USMI	Present	Present	Present	Absent	Present	Absent	Absent

### Key

-  Stated during admittance consultation and subsequently recollected during client interview.
-  Stated during admittance consultation which was not subsequently recollected during client interview.
-  Statement made during client interview which was not made during admittance consultation.

Despite veterinarians valuing informed consent, the results show a great degree of inconsistency in the risks that veterinarians chose to disclose to their clients. A particular bias was noted towards those categorised as 'immediate' and 'short term' risks over 'long term' risks associated with elective OVH (ovariohysterectomy). This is despite over 84% of UK veterinary practices reporting weight gain and 72% reporting urinary incontinence as being disadvantages to neutering the bitch.



## Professor Stephen May awarded prestigious Betts Prize

Professor Stephen May, Vice-Principal for teaching and learning at the Royal Veterinary College, London, has been presented with the prestigious Betts Prize in recognition of his commitment to excellence and his contribution to the advancement of the RVC.

Professor May received the award at the RVC's Graduation Day celebrations held at Freemasons' Hall, near Covent Garden, on July 25 when the Class 2012 also received their degrees in veterinary medicine, veterinary nursing, bioveterinary science and comparative pathology.



Paying tribute to Professor May, RVC Principal Stuart Reid said: "It is fitting that Stephen, who has had a career long commitment to the teaching of veterinary surgeons, nurses and bioveterinary scientists, should receive the Betts Prize. Together with our colleagues, Stephen continues to promote innovation and excellence, reflecting the ethos promoted so well by former Principal Betts, in whose honour the award is presented."

Professor Reid added: "For over 220 years, the RVC has been at the forefront of veterinary research and teaching, and in remembering Professor Betts we restate our commitment to excellence in all our endeavours."

Professor May is a Cambridge graduate and initially joined the RVC as a PhD student. He was appointed professor of equine medicine and surgery at the College in 1993 and became Vice-Principal for learning and teaching in 2000. He was responsible for establishing the £4.9 million HEFCE funded Centre for Excellence in Lifelong and Independent Veterinary Education (LIVE) at the College and has led the development of innovative approaches to curriculum delivery, self-directed study, assessment and continuing professional development.

In 2012, Stephen was elected to serve on the Council of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. His reaction was as follows:

*"It is a huge honour to be elected to the Council by members of my profession. As all who know me can testify, I feel strongly about the responsibility of our profession to the public and the responsibility of RCVS for the profession, and look forward to the challenge of working with and balancing the interests of all stakeholders in these difficult times."*

Stephen currently chairs the RCVS Legislation and Advanced Practitioner Working Parties and is also a member of the Day One Competences Working Party.

## The LIVE Teaching Development Fund Awards

We are very pleased to announce that last year LIVE were able to award two 'Teaching Development Awards'.

- 1) Development of intelligent plastinated specimens for self-directed learning of anatomy and physiology – Dr Victoria Waring, Mr Brian Cox and Dr Raymond Macharia
- 2) Application for funding for extraction models to enhance the teaching of complex veterinary dental skills – Miss Rachel Lumbis, Prof Sue Gregory, Dr Karin Allenspach and Mr Peter Nunn

Full details of these projects can be found on the LIVE website, along with interim and final reports on all of the other projects that have been awarded. <http://www.live.ac.uk>

Each year the LIVE Centre gives undergraduate students the chance to win some funding to assist them with attending conferences and symposia.

Undergraduates are encouraged to write abstracts and posters to present at upcoming conferences and then submit them to the conference body for consideration. If successful, the LIVE Centre will then offer the students up to £250.00 towards their conference registration or travel fees.

The LIVE Centre funds three of these awards each year, one per term. Often there is more than one submission per term and the LIVE 'judging panel' must select who receives that term's funding.

There will be one winner drawn for each term

Term 1: Jan – Apr 2013

Term 2: May – Aug 2013

Term 3: Sept – Dec 2013

Each abstract should be submitted to LIVE once it has been accepted for the conference. However, the award will be made for the term in which the conference takes place. Please encourage all of your students to enter and send their entries to [mrodman@rvc.ac.uk](mailto:mrodman@rvc.ac.uk)

### LIVE Student Presentation Award winners for 2012:

The LIVE Centre would like to congratulate Rhiannon Wells (BVet Med 5, 2011/12). Rhiannon gave an oral presentation at the British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) 12th - 15th April. Her presentation was entitled 'Acute Kidney injury in acute heart failure in cats and dogs'.

Also to be congratulated is James Evans, (Graduated BVet Med 2012, abstract written in his final year). James presented at The 7th International Conference on Equine and Canine Locomotion, in Sweden in June. His abstract was entitled 'The relationship between speed and stride frequency in racehorses with and without catastrophic limb fractures'.

Finally, Lauren Hamstead (BVet Med 3, 2012/13) was also a winner and should be congratulated. Her abstract, entitled 'Retrospective Study of Early Pregnancy Loss in Thoroughbred Mares' was presented at the British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA) congress on the 14th

All abstracts can be accessed at [www.live.ac.uk](http://www.live.ac.uk)



## Ayona Silva Fletcher, National Teaching Fellowship Award:

Dr Ayona Silva-Fletcher, senior lecturer in veterinary education at the Royal Veterinary College (RVC) has been awarded a National Teaching Fellowship from The Higher Education Academy (HEA).

The National Teaching Fellowships are the most prestigious awards for excellence in higher education teaching and support for learning. This year 55 award winners were selected from over 180 nominations submitted by higher education institutions across England, Northern Ireland and Wales. Each will receive an award of £10,000 which may be used for professional development in teaching and learning or aspects of pedagogy.

Very many congratulations Ayona!

To read the full article, please go to: [http://www.rvc.ac.uk/News/PressReleases/pr1207\\_AyonaSilvaFletcher.cfm](http://www.rvc.ac.uk/News/PressReleases/pr1207_AyonaSilvaFletcher.cfm)

## Dr Vicki Dale leaves the RVC for pastures new:

As some of you may be aware, in December we gave Vicki a really good send off, to wish her well in her new role at the University College London's Information Services Division, as an e-Learning Evaluation Specialist. Thank you Vicki for all your hard work and contributions to LIVE over the last few years.

Good luck in your new role!

Vicki's new email address is [v.dale@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:v.dale@ucl.ac.uk)

## Kirsty Magnier, Distance Learning Developer

Kirsty Magnier changed her role in February 2012 and is now the Distance Learning Developer for the MSc in Veterinary Education. In this new role Kirsty is now responsible for developing the distance learning course materials for the MSc in Veterinary Education. She is also involved as a course tutor to give feedback to formative assignments. Kirsty is still also responsible for a research project on 'teaching observations at a distance' and involved in research on 'patchwork text assessment'.

# Challenges of Teaching Professional Skills



## Challenges of Teaching Professional Skills, Martin Whiting

While I know assessment is an excellent indicator of the effectiveness of teaching as well as a feedback system for the student, I had underestimated its effectiveness as a mechanism of feedback to the teacher. This was brought home to me with resounding clarity during the grading of the recent veterinary ethics summative assessment. This course, as part of the professionalism strand which runs through all taught years at the RVC, had been prepared especially for the new curriculum and is in excess of what is presented at other universities or required by the RCVS. The success of such an enterprise is notoriously hard to assess. To its credit the recent exam grades presented as well spread and mostly correlated with similar grades the candidates achieved in other subjects. However, the gut-feeling I had when reading through the submitted essays did not return such a positive response. Their essays on professionalism and veterinary ethics seemed to be an almost binary event. "They got it or they didn't". There appeared to be a fundamental, underlying element within the hidden curriculum that I was missing in my teaching of professional skills. So where did it go wrong?

The problem of professional skills being 'sidelined' in terms of perception of importance is in some sense endemic within the university culture. Questions over the amount of time dedicated to this within the timetable are fielded from equal numbers of faculty as from students. While taught material relating to a 'real' disease, or even that which the student can see as the James Herriot ideology of a veterinarian, is held in a mythical regard as the apogee of the veterinary student's education, professional skills are perceived as peripheral at best. Mere common sense. Here at the RVC, this teaching occurs on the same day each week, leading to its epithet of "Optional Wednesdays". This perception is, to me at least, the greatest challenge of teaching professional skills: the need to imbue into the student the gravitas of the topic. But it may be the gravitas of the topic that is its own undoing.

Yes, we need to graduate veterinarians with the skills and reasoning to function on day one in practice and to continue in their life-long learning, but it is the understanding of professionalism that will allow them to do this without being struck out of the profession. It is, almost, the only subject taught without which the graduate may forcibly have their career cut short while inducing a simultaneous professional obloquy, as was seen in Panorama in 2010.

The recent assessment of the students revealed their binary understanding of professionalism so there must remain substantial conceptual difficulties in teaching this subject. Referred to as the "softer skills", it can be problematic for a punctilious positivistic mindset, such as we see in scientists, to contextualise professional studies into a "learnable" subject. The absence of bullet points, factoids, meticulous definitions and systematic processes that are seen in the traditional factual recall teaching in science can render the subject ungrounded, leaving the student floating. Social sciences rarely blend well with logical positivism. It is accepted that no prior knowledge of veterinary science is needed, or indeed assumed, and thus the student arrives at university to learn this from scratch. But to assert they need to learn about professionalism, which is something they may assume they already possess, can imply a deficit in, or a challenge to, their moral character. Yet the two subjects are not all that different.

Professional studies does assume the student understands its core concepts and they have obviously already succeeded in their

# Challenges of Teaching Professional Skills



professional behavior, to a societal standard, to have achieved their place at university; this is similarly true in science teaching. The candidates arrive at university with the core knowledge and skills in science that society expects from an A-Level graduate. The purpose of the veterinary course is to take what they already know and the skills they already have, in both science and professionalism, and to develop them into what society expects not of the average member of the public, but of a member of the veterinary profession. This includes the 'hard' veterinary skills as well as those associated with professionalism.

The reversal of the ironic denigration of professional skills teaching among staff and students will not be an easy undertaking. Respect for an academic subject is something that is earned. Those who practice the hard skills gain this by excelling at their practical subject either clinically or through research. How does one excel at professional skills in an environment, and profession, of already enforced and assumed professionalism?

The reality of the major challenge to professional skills teaching is actually that the fundamental importance of the subject, and the students' relation to it, is lacking. People can readily identify a role model of excellence in any hard veterinary skill, but less so can they identify a role model of professionalism. This is either because there are none or that everyone is already maximally achieving it. This latter option is unlikely. Senior members of the profession define their professional conduct within the context of their training, their learned habits and ideals they perceive. But those entering the profession today understand the world with a slightly different ideology of what the professional person looks like. The gap between the established and junior members of the profession needs to be bridged to bring the concept of professionalism within the reach of those who are now trying to develop these skills. This will make it real, applicable, achievable and most significantly, it will make it important.

Professional resistance to elements of modern life such as the social media enterprises of Twitter and Facebook, will do little more than alienate the junior members from the established. It somehow implies that the established ways are the appropriate ways and the new members must disrobe from their current construct of life to conform to the old profession. But considering the establishment of professional identity is based almost entirely on the social contract and the societal expectations of that profession, it is equally reasonable to assume that those new members entering the profession have some idea what contemporary society expects. To live in an isolated bubble of assumed professionalism we risk exacerbating the gulf between not only the established members and the students, but also between the profession and the public. There is a great deal we can learn from our new colleagues. Engaging more directly with new members will not only allow them to see the established professional members manoeuvring in 'their' world context, but will also ensure that the profession as a whole does not detach itself from society through enshrining a self-perceived anachronistic professional ideal. Professionalism then becomes a mutual indenture, the new members are led by identifiable, relatable examples, while the established members are brought, sometimes kicking and screaming, into the realm of what the future may be like.

Professional skills has a perceived non-importance which is exacerbated by its intangibility, its perceived simplicity, but importantly it can be seen as an archaic paternalistic doctrine resulting in a cultural chasm of the professionalism of the past and the future world. We need to engage with modern elements that will be the future challenges to professional behaviour, through doing so, we navigate them with the future members

# Challenges of Teaching Professional Skills



bringing a new working understanding of professionalism to all of us and a unity of professional identity. Professionalism is a dynamic subject and constantly developing, the established members who do not adapt to modern framework are as much at risk of deviating from the professional ideal as the new members who are trying to determine this ideal for the first time.

Questions of professional conduct are some of the hardest to answer, we cannot predict what the future will hold and how the profession will need to adapt itself in social, political and technical arenas. As each new challenge presents itself, eg. corporate practice, novel procedures or social media, we are unable to formulate a structured testable experimental model as to how to proceed. Trial and error approaches are fraught with potential disasters. Thus, the skill needed to cope with a shifting paradigm of professional identity, which is a very real progression, will require the same technique as any skill: practice, reflection, correction. Critically though, as you would with any new venture, the practice needs to occur in a safe environment such as the undergraduate will experience in the university. Current professionals need to engage with future professionals on all current affairs in order to test, in a safe place, how the old and the new would resolve the matter. Keeping professional skills teaching problem-based focussing on contemporary and controversial issues yet contained in a safe environment can allow us all to train our professionalism skills. It is those who are successful at this who may go on to become the identifiable role models of professionalism that is needed. This will help make it applicable, real and maintain the gravitas without overburdening the concept with Draconian rules.

Closing on a practical note, it may be time for the established to engage with the student body on a current minefield of professional/personal conflict; social media. After all, it is mostly those who do not think they need to develop their professionalism further who are the ones most detached from its modern ideal. How are the students to know about professional use of social media if we are not already on there utilizing it? How are we to know about the latest social media if we are not engaging with the student body who will inform us? We, as the professionals, are altruistically servants to society; if society changes so must we, but we have to notice that change. Engage with the student experience, they are our future diviners of professionalism; it is the only way to mutually take our profession forward and to assist with this major challenge in teaching professionalism.

I have no doubt that to some this article will be provocative, and to others controversial and I happily welcome any thoughts, comments, criticisms and complaints but, to be in keeping, all replies must be delivered through twitter with the hashtag #OptWed !

@MWhiting81

## Insights from veterinary interprofessional interactions: implications for interprofessional education (IPE) in the veterinary curricula, Tierney Kinnison

Tierney Kinnison began a Bloomsbury funded PhD in October 2012, provisionally entitled 'Insights from veterinary interprofessional interactions: implications for interprofessional education (IPE) in the veterinary curricula'. It is a joint project between the Institute of Education and the Royal Veterinary College, and the supervisors are Professor David Guile (IOE) and Professor Stephen May (RVC). This project is particularly timely due to significant changes, such as the professionalisation of veterinary nurses, which pose new challenges for practising veterinary surgeons and nurses, as well as their undergraduate and continuing education. Veterinary surgeons and nurses don't only work together; many other occupations such as practice managers, receptionists, farmers, physiotherapists, human dentists, animal behaviourists and others, also take part in the day to day treatment of animals and should be considered with regard to veterinary interprofessional working.

The project aims to use social network analysis (SNA) to quantitatively map interprofessional interactions within veterinary practices (including farm animal, small animal, referral) in order to demonstrate the importance of considering interprofessional interactions, and the possibility of introducing interprofessional education into the undergraduate curriculum. Following the SNA, case study methodology will be used to identify interactions which work well, and emerging problems for the professions to address. Up to five case studies will be developed primarily through direct observations in the workplace and semi-structured interviews with selected individuals.

The outcomes of this project will include recommendations to colleges, practices and governing bodies for training the veterinary team to produce effective teams with better working relationships and providing better quality of care for clients and outcomes for patients.

Tierney has worked as a Research Assistant in the LIVE Centre for the past four years, and will continue to be involved with some of the projects she has worked on, including NOVICE, the Wellcome Trust funded 'Building the Body' project and haptics teaching.

## Professionalism re-visited, Carrie Roder

It will not come as a surprise to anyone to hear that the type of student entering the veterinary profession has changed markedly over the past decade. Within veterinary education, female students now outnumber male students 4:1<sup>1</sup>. Added to this, initiatives such as the governments widening participation agenda<sup>2</sup> have provided an opportunity for those from less privileged backgrounds to get into a profession that has been, and still is, dominated by those from the higher social classes<sup>2</sup>.

These aren't the only changes though. Our current students have grown up in the age of social media, listing every minute detail of their lives for all to see; publicly airing grievances and sharing embarrassing details from the night before. They have grown up with the confidence to use their voice and expect it to be heard.

But what will be the impact of this new wave of individuals on the veterinary profession, and in particular, professional conduct? Should we really be judging these students based on a mould of professionalism determined in a by-gone age? Or should we be embracing their way of life and adapting our view of the profession to suit? In the light of these generational and cultural differences, it is perhaps timely to revisit what we believe to be the correct professional conduct for the veterinary profession.

*Carrie is currently putting the finishing touches to her PhD on the hidden curriculum of veterinary education. If you have any thoughts on this article, or professionalism in general, please feel free to contact her: [croder@rvc.ac.uk](mailto:croder@rvc.ac.uk).*

1. RCVS (2010) *The Annual Report of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons: part 2*. London RCVS
2. THE PANEL ON FAIR ACCESS TO THE PROFESSIONS (2009) *Unleashing aspiration: the final report of the panel on fair access to the professions*. London, Central Office of Information





## Content Management System Development

In January of 2012 the Animal Care Trust (ACT) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) departments launched their new websites that were developed by LIVE using the content management system Orchard ([www.orchardproject.net](http://www.orchardproject.net)). Orchard is a free open source CMS, funded by Microsoft and built upon ASP.NET. It has an ever-growing and vibrant community offering support, as well as contributing modules and themes, which is key to their strategy of producing reusable components for all. Orchard is also fully customisable which enabled us to develop both websites with strict adherence to the client briefs whilst still maintaining full flexibility with functionality.

2012 saw a very productive year and since completing the first stages of the ACT and CPD sites we have taken full advantage of Orchard and have used it as our technology choice to provide solutions for a number of our projects:

- OLIVER - <https://oliver.live.ac.uk/>
- ATP - <http://www.atp.ac.uk/>
- Elephant Transit Centre - currently organising a URL
- ILHP - <http://www.atp-ilhp.org/>
- OSCE - finalising content for release
- LIVE - <http://www.live.ac.uk>
- RVC Student Union - <http://su.rvc.ac.uk/>
- Veterinary Ethics - <http://www.vetethics.com/>
- Clinical Skills Centre - <https://csc.rvc.ac.uk> (RVC account required)
- Continuing Professional Development - <http://cpd.rvc.ac.uk/>
- Animal Care Trust - <http://www.rvc.ac.uk/act>

## e-Commerce Platform Development

Our technical and design team (Peter Nunn & Jeff Bullock) have been busy developing an e-commerce platform initially for use by CPD. The platform will allow users to instantly purchase and watch CPD videos online, as well as request their certificates. There are plans to use the same platform to deliver online shops for both ACT and our Student Union.

## Mining for Clinical Data



Jeff Bullock has been working with Noel Kennedy (VCS) in developing VetMine (<https://vetmine.rvc.ac.uk>) an online clinical search tool. VetMine is a sophisticated research tool that enables searching across coded data in CRIS and Labvantage (LIMS) test results. You can build up searches with all sorts of combinations of findings and measurements across the two systems. To give the idea, you can search for Labradors with an WBC > 10 x 10<sup>9</sup> /l who are obese. You will soon also be able to perform a free text search across all clinical notes, allowing even more data to be searched.



# Responsive Design

Technology changes quickly and all our new web and content management system developments are now created with a responsive design approach. This means that sites are created to respond to various viewing platforms from mobile phones, tablets, through to large screen desktops ensuring an ultimate viewing experience no matter what device.

The soon to be released LIVE website was our first attempt at developing a site with this framework in mind before production started.



www.live.ac.uk

Additionally the Clinical Skills Centre website was redesigned in 2012 to ensure that it was responsive to various viewing platforms. We are currently in the process of updating the ACT and Student Union website so that they are responsive to all viewing devices.



cpd.rvc.ac.uk

TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENTS



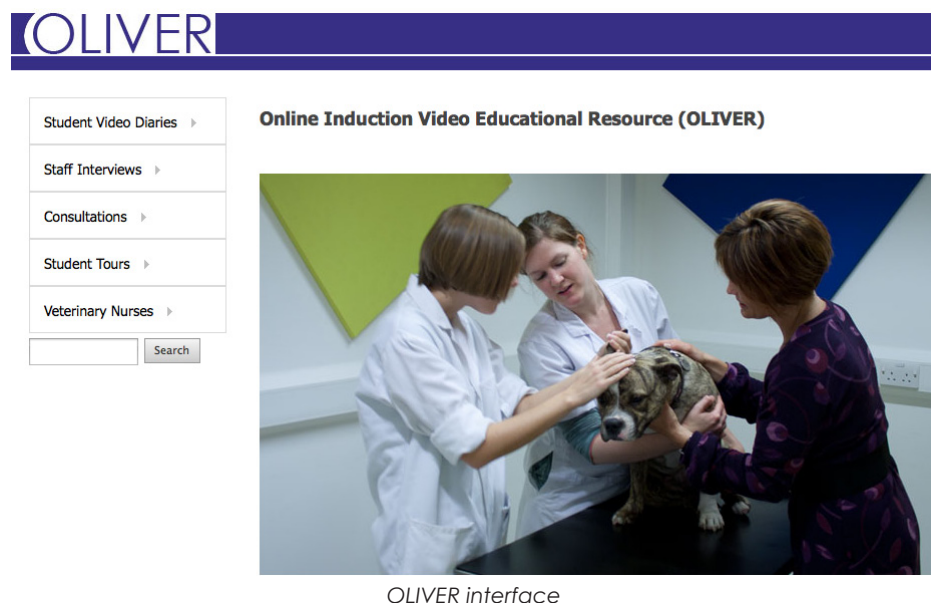
## Online induction video educational resource

The OLIVER website went live on October 31<sup>st</sup> 2011 and has been going from strength to strength. This is an interdisciplinary project involving veterinary and veterinary nursing students in the production of an interactive online video resource. This resource was developed to allow the students to better understand the realities of their roles and responsibilities in the workplace to help better prepare them for the clinical workplace (specifically intra-mural rotations and nursing placements). The project has been jointly funded by the Higher Education Academy Subject Centre in Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine and Health Sciences and Practice.

The OLIVER web resource produced four different types of videos:

1. Video diaries from the perspective of former students of what it was like to be on rotations.
2. Staff interviews (clinicians and nurses) detailing their role and expectations of the students on rotations and nursing placements.
3. The 'process of a consultation' in the varying learning environments (QMH, Equine, Farm and Beaumont) was filmed.
4. Student tour of small animal and equine hospitals explaining important elements of each of the hospitals

It is a resource which the students use in their own time and in their own way for flexible learning. Marketing of the resource internally to the students in compulsory large group lectures, messaging boards and through word of mouth has worked well with a gradual increase in the number of students visiting the site not once but returning again to see other videos. Early statistics show a large interest in the video diaries section of the web resource with over 1600 views. Evaluation of the resource through an online survey is anticipated with the current final year group students (2012-2013) who finish in April 2013.



OLIVER interface



## Clinical Skills Centre Website Content Management System.

The Clinical Skills Centre, along with Peter Nunn and Jeff Bullock from LIVE, have been working together to develop a website resource for all RVC students and staff.

The rationale for this website was to provide a user friendly online learning resource that the students can use to access the Clinical Skills Centre's vast resources including skill videos and clinical skill sheets, specifically designed to complement the Day One Skills booklet.

[http://www.live.ac.uk/documents/DOS\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.live.ac.uk/documents/DOS_handbook.pdf)

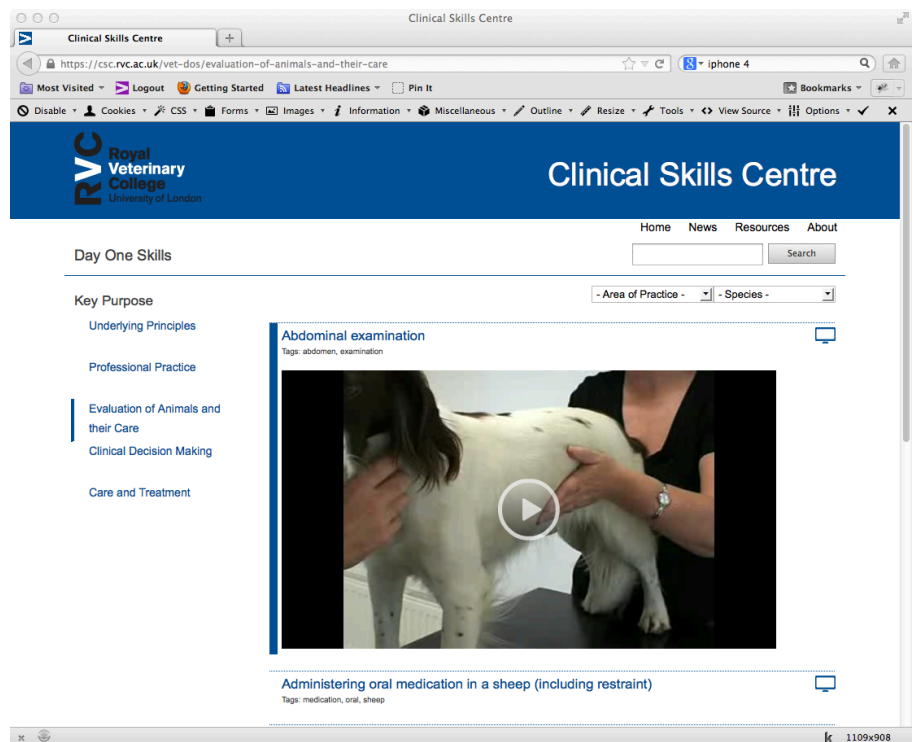
The new website is still in its infancy and is being trialled at present and will be going through some adjustments over this coming year.

Please see our website for more information:

<https://csc.rvc.ac.uk>

Alternatively, please contact [fbrown@rvc.ac.uk](mailto:fbrown@rvc.ac.uk) with any feedback or questions.

Fiona Brown (Clinical Skills Centre)



<https://csc.rvc.ac.uk>

## Time for celebration

Once again it has been a very busy time for the MSc Vet Ed team. Without doubt the highlight of the academic year came on Graduation Day in July 2012. After 2 years of hard work, staff were able to congratulate and celebrate alongside the first cohort of MSc graduates (see picture below). Determination and patience resulted in 7 students successfully completing their studies and receiving their MSc in Veterinary Education.

Student numbers across the board have continued to increase, with 2011/12 seeing 19 students complete the PG Certificate and 2 students the PG Diploma, with 5 more continuing in 2012/13. All those who successfully completed the PG Certificate will now become Fellows of the Higher Education Academy, increasingly a probationary requirement of many UK universities. In 2012/13 we have 21, 20 and 3 students studying for the Certificate, Diploma and MSc respectively.

The launch of the Distance Learning programme has also proved highly successful and we highlight overleaf the global interest and response sparked by this initiative. It is clear that the MSc in Veterinary Education fills a need felt by many international veterinarians and student recommendations and further marketing campaigns have already led to a significant rise in new enquiries for the coming academic year.



Graduation day – (L to R) Dr Renate Weller, Mr. Kim Whittlestone (staff), Emma Davies, Dr. Vicki Dale (staff), Hilary Orpet, Dr Charlotte Lawson, Dr Raymond Macharia, Nicki Coombes, Rachel Lumbis, Dr. Ayona Silva-Fletcher (staff), Prof. Stephen May (staff).

# LIVE

## MSc in Veterinary Education

Refreshes the parts other qualifications cannot reach



The RVC LIVE Centre launched the MSc in Veterinary Education in 2010. As the first discipline-specific postgraduate education programme worldwide, it quickly established a reputation for successfully developing individuals as skilled practitioners in the world of veterinary education.

In September 2011 the Distance Learning programme was launched specifically to meet the increasing demand from overseas students; students attracted to the course because of its unique blend of veterinary focussed expertise and broad based educational theory.

Since then, the MSc in Veterinary Education has gone from strength to strength. Not only have our student numbers increased significantly but we now welcome learners from around the globe. From California to Dublin and Hong Kong to Melbourne, UK course participants have been joined by those from the United States, Europe, Asia and Australia.

Over the past year, global students have worked alongside their UK peers, utilising the RVC online Learning platform and online conferencing software to fully participate in workshops and discussions with fellow students and course tutors. At times scheduling a workshop for students from multiple time zones has been a challenge, but a high degree of student and staff flexibility has enabled us to overcome any operational difficulties to ensure that participants communicate effectively and easily.

Participant feedback has been excellent:

"Love the web format of the distance learning course: well-paced and structured".

"Tutors and support staff were always available by email or phone/Skype to answer questions and give advice or help; much appreciated".

"If I had any problems it has been easy to contact someone to help me and all have been very kind and willing to do so."

"All staff were very supportive, ready to answer questions and offer advice....the Learn platform was great and allowed me to gain a lot more from the course".

Increasingly overseas students are recognising the enhanced career progression offered by this course as both the face-to-face and Distance Learning options are now fully accredited by the Higher Education Academy. All those who successfully complete the course automatically become a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, increasingly a probationary requirement of many UK universities.

## Academic Year 2011 – 2012

### 2012

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**May, S.A.** (2012) The flank cat spay: eminence-driven fashions in veterinary surgery. *Veterinary Record* 170, 460-461.

**May, S.A.** (2012) The flank cat spay: eminence-driven fashions in veterinary surgery. *Cat Care* 3, 73-74.

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Ogden, U., **Kinnison, T., May, S.A.** (2012) Attitudes to Animal Euthanasia do not Correlate with Acceptance of Human Euthanasia or Suicide. *Veterinary Record* 171(7): 174.

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**Roder, C, May, S A and Whittlestone, K.** (2012) Views of professionalism: a veterinary institutional perspective. *Veterinary Record* 171, early online publication.

Starke, S. D., Witte, T. H., **May, S. A.** and Pfau, T. (2012) Accuracy and precision of hind limb foot contact timings of horses determined using a pelvis-mounted inertial measurement unit. *Journal of Biomechanics* 45, 1522-1528.

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### 2011

Baillie, S., **Kinnison, T.**, Forrest, N., **Dale, V.H.M.**, Ehlers, J.P., Koch, M., Mandoki, M., Ciobotaru, E., de Groot, E., Boerboom, T.B.B. and van Beukelen, P. 2012. Developing an Online Professional Network for Veterinary Education: The NOVICE Project. *Journal of Veterinary Medical Education*, 38(4): 395-403.

# Educational Research Publications



**Magnier, K.**, Wang, R., **Dale, V. H. M.**, Murphy, R., Hammond, R. A., Mossop, L., Freeman, S. L., Anderson, C. & Pead, M. J. (2011) Enhancing clinical learning in the workplace: A qualitative study. *Veterinary Record*.

Stokes, A., **Magnier, K.** & Weaver, R. (2010) What is the use of fieldwork? Conceptions of students and staff in geography and geology. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 35(1), 121-141.

Rhind SM, **Baillie S**, **Kinnison T**, Shaw DJ, Bell CE, Mellanby RJ, Hammond J, Hudson NPH, Whittington RE, Donnelly R. The transition into veterinary practice: Opinions of recent graduates and final year students. *BMC Medical Education* (2011), 11:64 (doi:10.1186/1472-6920-11-64).

vDevelopment of the VN online clinical placement tool. *The Veterinary Nurse* (2011), 2(8): 428-433. Access VN Online Clinical Placement Tool

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