Proposal for LIVE Development Award:

**The three ‘Rs’ of Veterinary Professionals: Resilient, Reflective and ‘Ar’tistic.**

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**Introduction and Background:**

In recent years, best practice in clinical professionalism teaching has been defined by a movement away from “teaching professionalism” and a shift towards supporting students in their professional identity development (Cruess et al 2014). Professional identity formation most importantly entails a process of identifying self, developing an awareness of one’s own values and ideals, and negotiating these into the realities of the demands of clinical practice. Supporting students’ identity development includes management of identity dissonance: how the student and novice practitioner manage situations where practice contradicts their own perceptions of professional care and behaviour. Such situations can be emotionally challenging, stressful and threaten one’s ability to remain ‘true to self’, as the student must rationalise their own priorities alongside the priorities of others and their conflicting needs. Having a well-developed sense of professional identity imparts resilience, augmenting other coping strategies for the management of career stress; it also enables higher levels of moral reasoning and supports the practitioner struggling with practice that conflicts with their valued ideals (Kroger & Marcia 2011, Thoits 2013, Wald et al 2015).

Veterinary education has important differences to those training doctors, in particular relating to the importance of clinician autonomy in individualising care to clients, patients and colleagues. As such, key learning outcomes relating to professional identity development in veterinary education are as follows:

* Identity exploration and understanding of self: Using reflection and exposure to different identities, the student is able to recognise their own values and priorities relevant to clinical and professional decision-making, and those of others.
* Critical reflection: The student is able to analyse complex situations, in particular where their preferred professional identity is challenged, and can reconcile these by applying taught theory, professional reasoning and their awareness of their own identity values.
* Decision making in the face of uncertainty: The student is able to create and implement solutions to clinical and professional problems, by applying and synthesising theory and evidence, where there is no single definable correct approach to practice.

Against this background, the proposed project uses three innovations that employ novel techniques for students to **reflect** on their veterinary education and develop mechanism for career **resilience** via the medium of **artistic** creativity. Table 1 presents the budget for the proposed project and Table 2 outlines the project’s activities, interventions and plans knowledge dissemination.

**Proposed Teaching Developments to Support These Outcomes:**

Innovation 1: Using a choice of media to reflect on development of self.

BVetMed students at the end of year 2 will be asked to submit an assignment reflecting on their developing professional identity over the first 2 years of the course. The assignment may be completed in whatever medium the student chooses (reflective essay, photo diary, painting, narrative story) but they will be encouraged to be as creative as possible. As an incentive, 2 prizes will be awarded: one for the most creative submission, and one for the student who best demonstrates overcoming a fear of failure.

Learning Outcomes: Reflection on self, and decision making in the face of uncertainty.

Rationale: There is increasing interest in the use of visual and creative arts in medical education. Incorporating the arts into clinical teaching is aimed at increasing compassion, empathy, critical and flexible thinking, and appreciating multiple points of view (Reilly et al 2005), developing reflective and narrative skills and improving understanding of colleagues (Rodriguez et al 2013), and encouraging students to understand and engage with complexity, think imaginatively and laterally when encountering non-routine problems, and overcome fear of failure (Jackson 2005). Most reports of visual arts and literature in medical curricula describe interventions in which existing pieces of artwork, literature or poetry are incorporated into classes, with few reporting examples in which the students themselves are responsible for creating pieces of artwork. By asking the students to produce the work, this further emphasises their need to make decisions outside their usual ways of thinking and doing, and to commit to a plan where there is no clear correct answer.

Funding required: To train the award applicants in assessment in the creative arts, provide funding for materials needed by the students, and provide incentive prizes.

Innovation 2: Exploring identity by investigating role models

BVetMed students in year 3 will be asked to prepare a formative assignment in which they select a European-based role model who is associated with the veterinary profession and explain the values and priorities that define that role model’s professional identity. This will be marked according to the College’s Common Grading Scheme, and the 3 highest-achieving students will receive a stipend to carry out a week’s EMS with their chosen role model. Stipends will be awarded following submission of a report based on interviewing the role model, analysing the extent to which their professional identity is as presumed by the student, and including examples where the role model has experienced challenges in remaining true to self.

Learning outcomes: Identity exploration and critical reflection on situations of identity dissonance.

Rationale: A well-developed sense of identity includes periods of exploration and exposure to options (Kroger & Marcia 2011); encouraging the students to reflect on their preferred identities and consider identity options formalises this process and demands that they make informed choices.

Funding required: Funding high-achieving students to visit and interview their role models will provide incentives for students to engage in this process during the first year of implementation. We do not know how successfully students will be able to perform this task, and therefore the incentivised first year of implementation is to gather information needed to scaffold subsequent years, without the need for ongoing reward incentives.

Innovation 3: Reflection on ethically challenging scenarios.

BVetMed students of all years will be encouraged to reflect on situations that they have observed or experienced where the veterinary surgeon acts in a manner that conflicts with the students’ identity ideals. Feedback and scaffolding support will be provided through the tutor system (facilitated reflective discussion in tutorials and feedback in the students’ day one skills logs).

Learning outcome: Critical reflection on situations where professional identity is challenged.

Rationale: Addressing the conflict that occurs between the identity ideals of the veterinary student, and the situations one encounters in the complexity of clinical practice, promotes resilience in managing stress and identity dissonance (Wald 2015).

Funding required: To provide training for tutors in facilitating reflective discussions on professional identity issues.

**Table 1: Budget for the Proposed Project**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| £4000 | Funding to support training the applicants in assessing the creative arts. This includes travel to contacts in the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (MEd Learning and Teaching in the performing arts) and University of Brighton (Visual Practices Learning), information access costs, and attendance at relevant meetings. |
| £2000 | Stipend for 4 students for travel and other expenses for 1 week’s EMS with their selected role model |
| £2000 | Consumables for 2nd year reflective artwork |
| £1000 | Dissemination of findings (creative arts in the veterinary curriculum), including a funded event to display creative pieces |
| £500 | Student prizes for 2nd year reflective assignment |
| £500 | Refreshments for tutor training activities |

**Evaluation of Outcomes:**

One of the most significant challenges in professional studies education is student engagement (resulting from a number of sources, including hidden curriculum and assessment messages, preconceived notions of the skills and knowledge required to be a good vet, and students’ preferred learning approaches). A recent report demonstrates the challenges of demonstrating benefits in graduate competence resulting from professional studies interventions (Cake et al 2016). While we should not shy away from attempts to demonstrate improved graduate resilience, critical thinking, problem-solving and approaches to holistic veterinary care, this is beyond the scope of the proposed interventions (within the 2-year time period). However, we anticipate that the impact of the innovations could be evaluated as follows:

* Analysis of student engagement, with the aim that this is demonstrated in terms of high level cognitive engagement in the activities (evidence of critical analysis and critical reflection in the students’ assignments)
* Analysis of learning: a comparison can be performed between the demonstration of higher level learning outcomes (analysis and synthesis of information, relating content to self) in the year 4 exam question, before and after the innovations have been implemented.

**Future Directions:**

With the information obtained on student engagement, we anticipate that the creative reflective assignment in year 2, and role model assignment in year 3, will become permanent components of the course, with no further need for student incentives. We see a benefit to continuing the ‘showcasing’ of any creative submissions, and hope that the Department would fund necessary teaching supplies for this course element in future years. Following the initial trial we will have a better idea of the costs of continuing this activity.

**Table 2: Timeline:** Schedule of project events and dissemination activities (existing key activities included; proposed innovations highlighted)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Project activities** | **Time** | **BVetMed 2016 intake** | **BVetMed 2015 intake** | **BVetMed 2014 intake** |
|  |  | Start year 1 |  | Start year 2 |  | Start year 3 |
| Project begins | Sep 2016 | Use Day 1 Skills log to reflect on strand learning |  |  |
| Visits to experience assessing creativity & run workshops  |  |
|  |
| Tutor workshops: developing reflection on professional development in students |  |  | tutor engagement in PRS reflections | First EMS/ Yr 3 exams |
| May2017 | Studying for yr 1 exams | Studying for yr 2 exams | Year 3 PRS assignment |
| Jun 2017 |  |  | Role model identity assignment |
| Mark role model assignments and select EMS stipend recipients | Sep 2017 |  | Start year 3 | tutor engagement in PRS reflections | Year 4 PRS assignment |
|  |  |  |  | Year 4 exams |
|  | Jan 2018 | Working on creative reflective assignment  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Start rotations |
| Poster: VetEd |  | First EMS/ Yr 3 exams |  |
| Paper: JVME | May2018 | Year 2 exams | Year 3 PRS assignment | All stipend recipients to have submitted role model analysis |
| Mark creative assignments and select prize recipients |  | Submit assignment |  |  |
| Poster: AMEE/ Paper: Adv Health Sci Ed |  |  |  |  |
| Project ends | Sep 2018 | Prizes and showcase event |  |  |

Yellow = Innovation 1, Green = Innovation 2, Pink = Innovation 3

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**References**

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