

7 April 2020

**E-mail:** [president@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:president@rcvs.org.uk)

**Website:** [www.rcvs.org.uk](http://www.rcvs.org.uk)

Dear Veterinary Student

**Re: Temporary suspension of EMS regulations, to support veterinary students during the Covid-19 pandemic**

Further to my letter of 16 March, I am writing to update you on the situation regarding EMS regulations. In March, when the temporary changes to EMS requirements were first agreed in response to the emerging COVID-19 situation, the immediate focus was on supporting final-year students and removing barriers to graduation caused by the pandemic. We agreed to keep the situation under review for all students, and in light of the additional measures imposed by the Government on social distancing in the last few weeks, we have now considered the EMS requirements further.

Consequently, I'm writing to inform you about the further measures now agreed by the RCVS which are intended to support students at this difficult time and which I hope will offer further reassurance. The suspension of EMS will of course continue during this period when social distancing measures are in place.

First, the initial proposal to allow for a shortfall of four weeks for those of you in your final year of your programme has now been extended to eight weeks. Therefore, provided that you have undertaken a minimum of 30 weeks' EMS so far throughout the five years of the degree course, you will not have to make up any further weeks prior to graduation.

We also recognise that even once the Government relaxes the current constraints, which itself could be within months rather than weeks, opportunities for students to catch up with EMS may be limited in the short term, as things begin to return to normal. Therefore, we have taken the decision that all current fourth-year students should not be prevented from graduating, providing that you have completed your 12 weeks' pre-clinical EMS and at least 50% (13 weeks) of clinical EMS, in addition to also demonstrating that you have achieved all RCVS Day One Competences.

Although longer term impacts on veterinary business are currently unknown, it is reasonable to assume that there may be longer term challenges around EMS placements. For those of you in your third year of study, it is envisaged that the impact for you is likely to be less than those in the fourth year. However, we recognise that there may still be challenges around meeting the full EMS requirement depending upon how quickly EMS opportunities return to normal. I would like to reassure you that, should this be the case, we will also consider changing the EMS requirements for students currently in their third year of study. We will actively review the position for third-year students once a timeline for relaxing the current lock-down constraints has been released from the Government and the long term situation around the COVID-19 pandemic becomes clearer.

The longer term impact on students currently in their first or second year is likely to be less than for those in the latter years of study; it may be that opportunities for pre-clinical EMS return at an earlier stage than for clinical EMS, as the farming industry continues to operate. We will continue to keep the situation for these students under review, and be supportive.

Any further updates will be posted on the RCVS website [www.rcvs.org.uk](http://www.rcvs.org.uk), and communicated to you via your school.

I hope you are keeping safe and wish you well as this difficult period continues.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Niall Connell', written in a cursive style.

Dr Niall Connell  
President, RCVS