

1. Provider Context

1.1 Our educational mission and strategic aims

The Royal Veterinary College (RVC), established in 1791, is an independent Higher Education Institution (HEI), a member institution of the University of London (UoL) and recently, in common with other UoL member institutions, acquired university status. As an independent specialist institution, the RVC focuses its educational mission on its areas of expertise and educates over 2000 students, the majority of whom are undergraduates. The RVC was first recognised as a World-Leading Specialist provider in 2013 and this status was re-affirmed by the Office for Students in 2022¹. This status was further confirmed by its first place ranking in three of the last four years in the QS global rankings for Veterinary Science². The RVC has never been outside the top three since the QS metric's inception and we have scored 100% for academic reputation for the last 6 years.

The RVC's mission³ is *"to be a leading international authority in education, clinical care, research, expert opinion and employment in veterinary and biomedical sciences"*. Our Strategic Plan makes a clear commitment to being recognised as a *"world leader in veterinary science, biological and biomedical sciences and veterinary nursing education"*, and *"the delivery of a student-focused university experience"*. This includes a commitment to *"offer, and evolve, curricula which prepare students for their career destinations and lifelong learning"* and *"optimise the student experience"*. The curricula of all the RVC's undergraduate degree programmes focus on the knowledge, skills and attitudes that graduates need to succeed in their chosen careers. There is a strong focus on independent, active learning with an emphasis on acquisition of professional practical skills to enhance employability. Students have differing needs and ways of learning and so we have developed curricula in flexible ways helping individuals identify different pathways to success. Through its Lifelong Independent Learning in Veterinary Education (LIVE), the only veterinary-themed Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) in the UK, the RVC has been a leader in developing best teaching and learning practice in veterinary education which is reflected in our own curricular and pedagogical provision.

Skills teaching is integral to all our curricula. As the veterinary and veterinary nursing (VN) programmes automatically allow graduates to join the veterinary profession, they have clearly stated competencies that must be achieved by the time of graduation. This necessitates a focus on professional and clinical skills development and assessment. The RVC has been a pioneer in these areas being the first institution in Europe to establish a veterinary Clinical Skills Centre (CSC) for the instruction of veterinary and VN students in a safe and controlled environment. Further, we pioneered the development of veterinary Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs) – a practice now widely adopted at other veterinary schools in the UK and elsewhere (SO4).

The RVC operates from three campuses - the Camden campus in North London, the Hawkshead Campus near Potters Bar, and Bolton's Park farm, a 220-hectare farm adjacent to the Hawkshead campus, allowing students to benefit from city and suburban environments. Students experience practical learning at our Equine Referral hospital and ambulatory practice, two first opinion veterinary hospitals (the Beaumont Sainsbury Animal Hospital and Acorn House Veterinary Practice) and the largest referral hospital in Europe, the Queen Mother Hospital for Animals. Our clinical facilities are populated by Europe's greatest concentration of veterinary specialists from >20 countries providing students access to some of the world's leading clinical educators and researchers. The RVC has extensive agricultural facilities at Bolton's Park Farm which provides our students with experience of animal handling and food animal clinical teaching, including multispecies livestock units and food processing facilities. Our clinical training facilities are complemented by contracted collaborators allowing access to some of the most extensive and varied clinical training opportunities of any veterinary school.

To support our educational mission, our campuses provide students with extensive social learning spaces; learning resource centres; student support facilities and sports centres that suit the needs of the professionally accredited curricula, facilitate the social aspects of learning and minimise barriers to accessing support (SE6).

In 2017, the RVC established the Directorate of Learning and Wellbeing (LWB) with the aim of creating inclusive wellness environments (digital, physical, social) for study and work as part of a whole university approach to wellbeing for staff and students. It provides a range of academic and student support services to develop engaging curricula and learning experiences that promote social learning and intellectual flexibility through our Blended Learning Strategy⁴. It ensures all students can successfully manage the transitions into, and out of, Higher Education. Specific initiatives include a skills-focused student induction which helps students develop digital, wellbeing, life and study skills to self-manage and thrive, strengthening a sense of belonging within the RVC community (SO2).

To support the aims of RVC's Strategic plan to "*deploy blended modes of delivery which accommodate the needs of all our students*" the Blended Learning Strategy was developed in 2021. In part a response to the pandemic, the strategy sets out a definition of active blended learning for the RVC's place-based and whole-class paced programmes. The strategy and associated staff development are key to providing consistency and flexibility of the student experience (SE1, SE4).

The RVC is a research-intensive institution that believes firmly that all teaching should be research informed and, wherever possible, delivered by those actively engaged in research. The RVC's research strengths were demonstrated by its excellent performance in the 2021 Research Excellence Framework in which 88% of research was rated as world-leading (4*) or internationally excellent (3*)⁵. All undergraduate degrees at level 6 or above require the successful completion of a final year project and we are one of only a very few institutions that have the resources to allow these level 5 projects to materialise (SE3).

The RVC educates undergraduates in three broad areas; Veterinary Medicine, Veterinary Nursing and Biosciences. All undergraduate degree programmes are selective in high-cost subjects of strategic importance. During the pandemic, students on the Veterinary Medicine and Veterinary Nursing programmes were classified as key workers and allowed to study on campus for the practical aspects of their programmes. (See modifications to the learning experience in SE1). Students are funded at band A for Veterinary Medicine and band B for Veterinary Nursing and the Biosciences.

The RVC's undergraduate degree programmes share several characteristics; such as external accreditation, the development of transferable skills for employability and, for all degrees at level 6 or above, an expectation that there will be active engagement with research (See SE3). The focus on skills development across all programmes means that graduates are highly sought after, with very high levels of employment achieved in our graduate outcomes (See SO3).

The supply of sufficient numbers of veterinary and veterinary nursing graduates is critical to animal welfare, public health and the UK economy. The veterinary profession and biological scientists are on the 2022 shortage list for UK occupations⁶. Most veterinary graduates enter private general practice either as small animal (pets) or large animal (livestock, equine) practitioners. The RVC currently graduates the largest number of veterinarians in the UK and second largest number of any internationally accredited veterinary school in the world.

1.2 Our students and programmes

The TEF submission programmes align to three broad areas and contribute to the undergraduate population (Table 1). All the students in these programmes will graduate from a professionally accredited programme, the majority being vocational.

Table 1. Composition of the RVC's student population by degree programme

Programme	Population %
Veterinary Medicine - BVetMed (level 7)	60.4%
Bioscience - (levels 6 & 7)	24.6%
Veterinary Nursing - FdSc (level 5) BSc (level 6)	15.0%
Grand Total	100.0%

Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine (BVetMed)

The BVetMed programme is delivered as both a 5-year and a 4-year (graduate entry) pathway. In addition, there is a one-year "Gateway" option for academically able applicants who meet widening participation criteria. Starting in 2005 and the first of its kind, this widening participation route via a Foundation Year guarantees successful students access to the 5-year BVetMed.

The BVetMed takes an academically robust and innovative educational approach to veterinary education informed by the RVC's own educational research (SE4). The programme focuses on developing students' knowledge and clinical, research and problem-solving skills through a "spiral" curriculum in which topics are visited and revisited as students' progress. It is fully integrated with respect to teaching and assessment (SE1) and all students undertake final year research projects (SE3).

The BVetMed degree is internationally accredited by numerous bodies including the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) in the UK, the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE) in the EU, the Council on Education of the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) in the USA and Canada⁷, and the regulators in Australasia and South Africa. These international accreditations enhance significantly the opportunities for BVetMed graduates to work in numerous countries around the world.

Veterinary Nursing programmes (VN)

The RVC currently offers two VN degrees: FdSc (Level 5) and BSc (Level 6). The FdSc is accredited by the RCVS⁸ leading to graduates obtaining automatic registration with the UK regulatory authority (RCVS) and recognition as a Registered Veterinary Nurse (also achieved by those on the BSc). The flexible approach of two pathways supports widening participation and flexible career choices. Nurses entering the Foundation degree who excel in their early years are able to transfer to a BSc and those on the BSc who prefer to finish early with their RCVS registration can do so after completing the FdSc requirements.

The RVC has been at the forefront of the development of veterinary nursing as a professional occupation over the last three decades. The RVC pioneered degree level veterinary nursing, setting up a joint degree with the University of Middlesex in the 1990s. Veterinary nursing has continued to develop as a profession with the RCVS establishing a register of veterinary nurses in 2007, their recognition through a professional charter in 2015 and, most recently, by veterinary nursing being reclassified in Standard Occupational Classifications 2020 as an associate professional occupation (SO3).

Our science programmes; BSc in Biological and Bioveterinary Science (Biosciences)

The Biosciences degree programme started as a single BSc in Bioveterinary Sciences in 2002 as a response to an acknowledged lack of graduates with an appreciation of whole animal science. The RVC now offers several degree pathways at BSc and MSci levels, enabling students to develop their subject specific knowledge and understanding in areas of research excellence. The RVC was the first UK veterinary school to offer this type of programme and to be accredited by the Royal Society of Biology (RSOB) with Advanced Accreditation⁹ where appropriate. In order to obtain accreditation,

programmes must have a clear focus on skills development, including subject-related skills such as laboratory and/or field work (SE1, SE3).

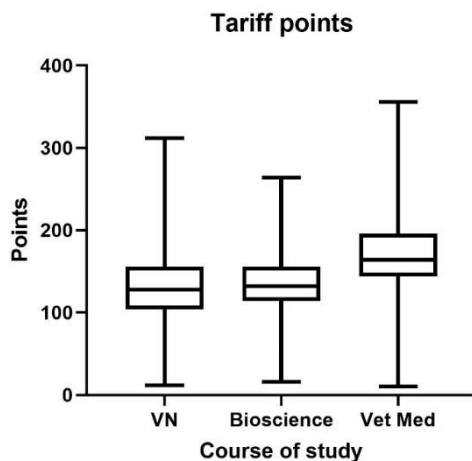
The majority of our programmes have a split of ~varying entry tariffs (Table 2).

This figure is likely to be under-reported as students may be reluctant to report any condition that may be construed as limiting in a professional programme.

Table 2. Key characteristics of the RVC undergraduate student community

Gender	Male 22%				Female 78%								Male 18%				Female 82%								Male 20%				Female 80%								Male 4%				Female 96%								Male 21%				Female 79%											
Age	<21 78%	21-25 15%	26-30 4%	>30 3%	21-25 84%				26-30 13%				>30 3%				<21 98.34%				21-25 1.42%				26-30 0.23%				>30 0%				<21 77%				21-25 10%				26-30 7%				>30 6%				<21 93%				21-25 5%				26-30 1%				>30 1%			
WP	Priority 18%	Non-WP 61%		N/A 21%	Priority 12%	Non-WP 30%		N/A 58%		Priority 55%	Non-WP 45%			Priority 37%	Non-WP 60%		N/A 3%	Priority 22%	Non-WP 67%		N/A 11%																																											
% Int.	UK 79%		International 21%		UK 42%		International 58%		UK 100%								UK 97%		Int. 3%		UK 89%				Int. 11%																																							
BVetMed					Accelerated					Gateway					All Vet Nurse					All Bioscience																																												
Veterinary Medicine										Veterinary Nursing										Bioscience																																												

Figure 2. Entry tariff by programme



The VN programmes offer flexible routes to accredited nursing qualifications. The majority of the students are female, from the UK and entering with level 3 qualifications. Some of the key challenges relate to this being a professionally demanding programme that requires completion of a high number of placement hours. Our approach to supporting these programmes is discussed in SE1, SE3, and SE5.

The suite of Bioscience programmes offers high quality, accredited degree programmes, in which students are stimulated to challenge accepted wisdom in diverse fields of biological, bioveterinary and biomedical science. It prepares graduates for a variety of career paths (academic

and industrial research, biotechnology, the pharmaceutical industry and other health and medicine-related industries) whilst also offering a preparatory route for graduate entry to Medicine, Dentistry or Veterinary Medicine. However, some Biosciences students can see the programme as their second choice. A key aim of the programme's structure, and of our careers support arrangements, is to help students develop confidence in the wide range of transferable skills (practical science, research and professional) developed throughout their studies, and support them to explore the applicability of these skills to a range of career paths. This is explained in SE3 and SO4.

One of the key challenges for students in both the VN and Bioscience programmes has been the tendency to feel marginalised at the RVC in comparison to our BVetMed programmes. Recognising this, we have developed an inclusive environment within our campus community through our approach to induction, support and inter-professional activities. This is discussed in relation to our excellent continuation rates (SO2) and to aspects of the student experience (SE2, SE5)

1.3 The context of this submission

The Steering group overseeing the preparation of this submission

have worked cooperatively with our TEF student contact towards the completion of our respective submissions.

The cooperation included fortnightly meetings at which development of both submissions were shared. Additionally, analysis of TEF indicators and sources of secondary data to support aspects of the provider narrative were also shared and discussed.

2. Student Experience (features SE1 to SE7)

This section is structured using the seven features of the Student Experience. Where appropriate we have referred to the NSS questions which are indirect measures of some of these features. We have also extensively used other forms of evidence (Other NSS questions, Student Barometer¹⁰, external examiners reports, etc.) to highlight our educational mission and work done since the last TEF to embed successful initiatives and to improve our programmes generally. Where there are absences of excellence in the indicator values, we have contextualised the reasons for this and provided explanations for our approach and the ongoing work to address them.

As outlined above, there is an institution-wide focus on the development of independent adult-learners prepared for lifelong learning. In supporting students to become independent learners by progressive reduction in earlier “scaffolding” for learning, apparent anomalies between experience and outcome metrics may arise, with very good continuation, completion and progression measures sitting beside variable scores for some aspects of experience and learning support. Here we provide a narrative drawing on information from multiple sources and the approaches we adopt at the RVC to enhance the student experience.

2.1 Academic experience and assessment (SE1, SE2, SE3)

2.1.1 Evidence for teaching, feedback and assessment practices (SE1)

Our result in the NSS question on teaching (Table 3) is consistently high across all four years and all three programme areas (overall scores of 80 or above) placing us at, or above the high benchmark standard for all years.

Table 3. NSS responses related to satisfaction 2019-2022

The teaching on my course	2019	2020	2021	2022	Overall
Staff are good at explaining things.	83	81	79	77	80%
Staff have made the subject interesting.	95	97	89	91	93%
The course is intellectually stimulating.	88	91	85	84	87%
My course has challenged me to achieve my best work.	94	96	94	91	95%

**Overarching NSS response rates for RVC at Y1 89.7%, Y2 76.4%, Y3 80.6%, Y4 85.3*

This high level of overall learning satisfaction is also seen in the Student Barometer results from 2013-2019 with particularly high scores for our staff and lectures (Table 4).

Table 4. Student Satisfaction 2013-2019 by other surveys

Measure	RVC Learning Satisfaction (UK)
International Student Barometer (ISB)	90% (UK, 88%)
Student Barometer (SB)	95% (UK, 99%)
Expert Lecturers	98% (UK, 96%)
Quality Lectures	94% (UK, 89%)

**Student Barometer response rates for RVC at 37%, 33%, 36%, 43% for each year 2013 2015 2017 2019 respectively*

Our curricula are designed with consideration of the knowledge, skills and attitudes a graduate would be expected to achieve by the end of the programme. Assessments measure the achievement of these competencies, and the design of the learning experience employs a wide variety of teaching methods such as lectures, scaffolded active group learning, problem- and case-based teaching. These enable students to develop the requisite skills to approach scientific, clinical and professional problems and prepare them for integrated formative and summative assessments. Group exercises such as “directed learning” are used to develop teamworking and problem-solving and can be on campus or online. Many of the subjects taught at the RVC are practical in nature and skills are taught in an appropriate setting (e.g., laboratories, teaching hospitals, Clinical Skills Centre, live animal teaching facilities, placement providers). External Examiners have noted the “wide variety of teaching methods and styles employed by design and ... a great advantage in terms of the acknowledgement that there are many different learning styles”¹¹.

Practical teaching is integral to the BVetMed curriculum and includes basic science and pre-clinical skills teaching such as anatomy, histology, microbiology and parasitology as well as clinical skills and animal handling. When students enter the clinically focused years, regardless of their entry route, they experience a shift in the type of teaching, learning and assessment. Teaching is more varied, incorporates uncertainty and assessment involves not just factual knowledge but also clinical

and professional reasoning, decision-making and procedural skills. Students can initially struggle with this transition to the less controlled “real” world context.

Our VN students benefit from a new blended learning design of their reaccredited programme. This allows students to study at their own pace and collaboratively when applying theoretical knowledge to real-life case-based scenarios. It also builds a sense of belonging on campus in the first year prior to placement blocks (SE3) which are interspersed throughout the last two years. The reaccreditation report commended “the standard of our online learning platform, which is of particular value to this blended type of provision and the exceptional feedback provided by students on the existing pathways, demonstrating outstanding student satisfaction”⁸.

The RSoB Accreditation⁹ commented on several areas of good practice for the Bioscience programmes including: “the use of project work other than the final year projects; the student engagement with the research environment; that all students who wish to do a laboratory project are able to do so; the practical experience students gain in oral communication; the embedding of mathematics and physics in the curriculum; and the use of interactive “Directed Learning” workshop sessions”. Students are often directly involved in the institution's research endeavours, being integrated into the laboratory or research group of their project supervisor(s) (SE3).

The pandemic necessitated many changes to the learning experience leading to the development of the Blended Learning Strategy⁴ and Blended learning (BL) Rubric¹² that was benchmarked to external standards in order to support a consistent student experience while maintaining a focus on active social learning. These resources were used for all staff development sessions (SE4) with specific changes to the learning experience summarised below (Table 5).

A blended learning survey¹³ was run in 2021 (response rate 39% of all UG and PG students) to check if students felt they continued to learn effectively (45% agreed) and to identify issues. Some students preferred online lectures as they could study at their own pace (rewind, etc) but there were concerns about fatigue with screen time. Students also found different teaching approaches helped them to consolidate their knowledge (Table 5).

Table 5. Changes to the learning experience during COVID

Change to learning and user experience	Impact (+ or -) / Maintained? - Yes/No
Use of Learning Science and in- house “pre-lab” online activities for BioScience and GAB	+ Simulated experience of lab techniques (or an opportunity to revise) / Yes
Lab in a box –Equipment kits for practical activities sent to students	+ Developed psychomotor skills for lab activities and clinical settings when not on campus. No
Students working individually in laboratory practical classes	+ Better engagement and enhanced development of key psychomotor skills / Yes
Weekly learning plans on VLE	+ Helped students organise self-directed asynchronous learning time / Partially
Smaller, chunked pre-recorded lectures with captions	+ High quality learning materials in line with BL rubric standards / Partially
Higher use of online forums (Padlet, etc) for feedback	+ More inclusive approach to interaction and participation / Yes
Live streamed dissection practicals	+ Won U of London Centre for Online and Distance Education Roger Mills Teaching Innovation Prize 2021 / No
On-campus practicals in smaller groups	+ Canine wiki dissection practical won Anatomical Society education innovation prize 2020 / Partially
Online directed (group) learning	+ Attendance increased / Partially
Online proctored and non-proctored assessments	- Initially negative, but now +. Lower acceptable absence rate and increased access to feedback + Increased innovation in assessment design / Yes
No detriment and safety net policy	Did not impact pass rates ²² / No

External examiners were “impressed with how the changes made due to the COVID pandemic were embraced and progressed rather than returning to the ways we worked before”¹¹

and commended how “students were assisted during this sudden period of transition, with continuous updates from the Principal and the teaching staff, numerous methods to increase active learning and engagement.

¹⁴The consistency of average annual marks across the past four years demonstrates the effectiveness of our approach during the pandemic (Table 6).

Table 6. Average annual marks 2018-2021

Average annual mark	2018	2019	2020	2021
Veterinary Medicine	61	62	63	62
Veterinary Nursing	60	60	60	60
Biosciences	61	63	63	61

Accreditation proves that our degree programmes are designed to the demanding standards required by our professional bodies, and our assessment schemes ensure students meet the rigorous standards required for immediate entry to these professions. External Examiners confirm annually that students have been assessed to the standards defined by our professional bodies and are consistently “impressed by the rigor of the marking process including the statistical comparisons of individuals marking the same question and the double marking of a subset of scripts. Post hoc analysis was also utilised to identify possible anomalies/inconsistencies” ¹⁵. They also noted that the increased use of open book papers, due to the pandemic, “were particularly good, incorporating knowledge into good cases, testing assimilation of information given and learnt... and the curriculum was closely mapped to the exams”¹⁴.

Distinctive aspects of our assessment arrangements that promote excellence include: blueprinting of examinations, to ensure appropriate coverage of learning objectives; the use of standard setting, and the use of a question bank, including MCQs and Extended Matching Questions, which permits the selection of the most appropriate questions for each assessment, and collects data and generates information on their performance. This approach will be further enhanced in 2023 with the introduction of new curriculum mapping software.

The RVC-wide Common Grading Scheme and Award & Assessment Regulations are designed to ensure that students cannot progress or graduate before they have demonstrated the required standard. The Feedback policy¹⁶ sets out required turnaround times for assessment feedback and guidance on styles of feedback particularly with the change to online assessment. Different assessments and types of feedback are introduced to the students in the KickStart induction (SO4) to reduce anxiety about less familiar types of assessment.

Our approach to assessments is aligned with our aim to educate lifelong learners able to reflect and manage their own skills development and move from being dependent to independent learners. Students need to use personal initiative to determine how formative quizzes can benefit their learning: either to consolidate new knowledge or as part of revision. Table 7 provides a snapshot of the high level of engagement with formative quizzes for BVetMed in Years 1-4.

Table 7. Engagement with formative quizzes for BVetMed students

Assessment	Programme	2020/21		2021/22	
		% Attempt	% Completion*	% Attempt	% Completion*
LEARN Quiz	BVetMed - Year 1	50.7%	85.2%	82.4%	83.7%
	BVetMed - Year 2	47.3%	88.5%	84.9%	87.8%
	BVetMed - Year 3	70.3%	84.5%	61.2%	84.6%
	BVetMed - Year 4	73.4%	84.0%	83.5%	85.7%

*proportion of those students that attempted and also completed the quiz

We scaffold the development of professional skills and competencies using innovative learning resources (Folium, SE5) which oblige students to self-assess their clinical skills development as they move from novice to accredited professional upon graduation (SO4).

We recognise that students might find our approach to assessments different to more prescriptive assessment diets. Despite the varied nature of the assessment opportunities our results on the NSS questions on assessment and feedback are below benchmark in each of the 4 years with an overall value of 64%. As a consequence, new ways to help students to engage with the grading criteria and comments have been put in place. These include the creation of assessment pages on the programme sections of the VLE with links to the grading scheme, example questions, and exam paper layout, model answers, marked answers and general guidance (with the opportunity to review fourth and final year exam papers as a matter of course) and the development of project specific grading rubrics to increase the transparency of grading criteria and comments (Biosciences).

Despite the development of these new resources, we recognise this is an area where we need to continue to find new ways to communicate about the availability of these resources, how to use them and the rationale for our overall assessment approach in terms of helping students to take responsibility for their learning and skills acquisition. One new initiative is individualised learning support with our Student Success Coaches (SO1, SO5) to help students understand how to use feedback effectively. We also expect to see positive improvements by using increasingly varied ways to provide feedback (online sessions and assessments Table 5). To further support our approach, we now discuss assessment and feedback in induction and will use this as a starting point for communication with students (SO2).

2.1.2 Evidence of how course content and delivery inspire and stretch students (SE2).

Due to the high level of pedagogical literacy among RVC staff (SE4), the institution takes a similar approach to all its programmes. This has resulted in high levels of satisfaction in questions regarding stretch (87.5%), challenge for teaching (94.5%) (See 2.1.1) and the learning opportunities and learning community questions of the NSS. Over the four-year period we have consistently scored over 80% for all questions relating to learning opportunities (Table 8).

Table 8. Percentage responses to questions related to learning opportunities

NSS by Year	2019 RVC (UK)	2020 RVC (UK)	2021 RVC (UK)	2022 RVC (UK)	Overall RVC (UK)
Learning opportunities (All)	88 (83)	88 (83)	84 (78)	83 (79)	86 (81)
Learning Community - I have had the right opportunities to work with other students.	90 (85)	89 (84)	86 (75)	83 (77)	87 (80)

As identified in Section 1, advanced skills development and learning in the workplace (SE3) are integral to the BVetMed and VN qualifications. Students on both programmes gain extensive experience of workplace-based learning in facilities owned by the RVC or on placements at practices specifically contracted for that purpose. Various digital resources such as Folium (SE5) and the Nursing Progress Log (RCVS) support active engagement with skills development, reflection and feedback (SO4).

All students on the Bioscience programmes undertake a final year research project appropriate to their area of study. The RSoB requires programmes to have a clear focus on skills development, including subject-related skills such as laboratory and/or field work. There is also an expectation that transferable skills such as communication, problem-solving and teamwork are taught and assessed at all levels of the programme and that students should also be “encouraged and supported to develop their creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship”. These are incorporated into the RVC’s Biosciences “Practical Skills Logbook” allowing students to note and provide

longitudinal evidence of their progress (SO4). Further opportunity to develop skills relevant to the workplace is facilitated by a placement year (SE3)

2.1.3 Evidence of using research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and/or employer engagement as part of an outstanding academic experience (SE3)

At the RVC, teaching is “research-led” and all students are exposed to, and have the opportunity to participate in, research. The RVC is a research-intensive specialist institution; its success in this regard was confirmed by an excellent performance in the 2021 REF ⁵. In the “Agriculture, food and veterinary sciences” Unit of Assessment the RVC ranked first in “Research Power”¹⁷ and for translational research, with impact case studies being ranked “outstanding in terms of reach and significance”. All students on programmes at level 6 or above undertake specific training in research methods and conduct projects that contribute significantly to the award of their degree.

For those Bioscience programmes for which we achieved Advanced Accreditation⁹ the assessors noted “the effective linking of research and teaching; the RVC’s world class research environment leads to strongly research-led teaching and supports high quality research opportunities for students; the preparation of students for their period of practice through progressive project experiences at earlier levels; strong support for students on placement; a modern curriculum that prepares students for diverse career paths”.

In the BSc VN, all final year students study a “Research Methods” module and undertake a 60-credit research project. Veterinary Nursing, as a recognised profession, is in the early stages of development. Creating Veterinary Nurses capable of understanding and conducting research is helping to establish veterinary nursing literature and create a research-informed profession.

Students on the BVetMed programme undertake a final year research project of 8-12 weeks culminating in a ~5000 word final report that forms part of the final capstone examination. In the most recent iteration of the curriculum (introduced from 2021) the “Scholarship and Evidence Based Medicine Strand” runs throughout the curriculum with the explicit aim of illustrating the relevance of research to clinical practice and preparing students to undertake their final year project. Students are encouraged to present and publish the results of their research. Numerous publications and presentations were listed in the annual report of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee from 2019 to 2021¹⁸ and included the following awards: Knowledge Summary Veterinary Evidence Student Award; 2021 International Canine Health Award; and 3rd place (2020) Royal Entomological Society Student Award.

All programmes at the RVC have a significant focus on the development of graduates ready to practise their profession. As such, exposure to practitioners both within and outside the institution is an important part of all students’ education. The practical and professional nature of the BVetMed and VN programmes mean that long periods of time working with practitioners must be accumulated over the period of training. The VN students complete 52 weeks (or 1800 hours) of experience in practice. This is usually done in long placement blocks, during which students are allocated a clinical coach, a suitably trained veterinary nurse or veterinary surgeon, to mentor them in the workplace and monitor the achievement of the practical skills. Students on the BVetMed must complete 54 weeks of clinical training. Twenty-eight weeks of this is conducted on rotations in facilities directly owned or contracted by the RVC with a further 26 weeks undertaken as “Extra-mural studies” (EMS), a requirement of the RCVS. During these periods students will be working individually or in small groups (typically < 8 students) alongside qualified veterinarians.

Various opportunities exist for Bioscience students to work with practitioners. The “Certificate in work-based learning and research” provides a year of work-based study as part of any Bioscience pathway and shorter projects can be undertaken as summer studentships. Exposure to scientists active in research and entrepreneurship is facilitated through the London Bioscience Innovation Centre (LBIC). This is a wholly owned subsidiary of the RVC that provides facilities for life sciences

companies to establish a footprint in London. LBIC provides work-based study opportunities for RVC students and supports the student-led “Café Biologique” which exposes students to practitioners currently engaged in Bioscience research and entrepreneurship; many of whom are recent graduates (SO5).

2.2 Resources, support and student engagement (SE4, SE5, SE6, SE7)

2.2.1 Evidence of support for staff professional development (SE4)

We provide various types of professional development for academic, professional services and clinical members of staff to enable them to engage confidently in their teaching and tutorial roles. The RVC provides the only postgraduate Certificate, Diploma and MSc in Veterinary Education programme in the world. The PGCert VetEd is delivered through our LIVE Centre (Section 1), which focuses on expanding best practice in veterinary education, through inter-professional collaboration and development of teachers internationally. At the most recent Periodic Review¹⁹, the external reviewers recognised it as the “premier location to study veterinary education”.

The PGCert VetEd is compulsory for new RVC academics as a key part of our approach to student-centred outcomes-based teaching and provides an accredited taught route to Advance HE (HEA) Fellowship. HESA staff returns 2020/21 show that 45% of RVC academic staff hold a teaching qualification (PGCert and above) in contrast to the sector average of 32%. Our consistently high percentage of HEA Fellows is shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Teaching qualifications amongst RVC academic staff

Fellows employed at RVC	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Fellow	171	191	209	244	279
% of Academic staff	66.8%	68.3%	74.0%	83.8%	94.9%

Our plans for 2024 are to accredit a CPD route for advanced HEA Fellowship to recognise staff leadership roles which contribute to teaching quality (SE1) and continuation and completion (SO2). The CPD route will support our whole university approach by providing Fellowship routes for Professional Services staff to recognise their contribution to our educational mission. To recognise the equal importance of research and teaching routes for probation and promotion, we created “teaching fellow” pathways that parallel lecturer/senior lecturer routes and emphasise success in teaching.

Ongoing academic staff development is provided by the Educational Development team (LWB Section 1) through training and programme development/design support. During the pandemic this was essential to the successful pivot to emergency remote delivery, followed by a more planned blended learning design for consistency of the student experience. The RVC Blended Learning Rubric¹² was developed in 2020, aligning pedagogically sound learning design to externally benchmarked standards. Programme-specific ABC design workshops were developed as teaching teams began to adapt their sessions. Staff engagement was high with staff attending one or more of the 31 workshops in 2020-21²⁰.

To enable our tutors to support students confidently, dedicated resources have been developed for student success. During the pandemic, we recognised the need to communicate effectively with students and used a blended approach (videos, guides, workshops) to support staff managing their reactions to heightened student emotions through open and honest dialogue. We

also provided a guide for effective online tutorials. In 2022, we developed a range of signposting guides, so all staff were confident to direct students to appropriate support.

The RVC Professional Behaviours is a framework of expectations for staff across all departments and has been recognised by the Association of University Administrators (AUA) with a Mark of Excellence ²¹ at institutional level for successfully embedding them within its Academic Promotion procedures.

2.2.2 Evidence for a supportive learning environment and academic support. (SE5)

Our result on the NSS question for Academic Support is below benchmark for the duration of the four-year TEF period (71.9 compared to 78.6). However, in the most recent NSS both the VN and Bioscience students showed improved satisfaction levels which may be due to overall dissatisfaction during the pandemic that has improved with the return to campus teaching. Students on all programmes indicate they are satisfied with being able to contact staff (80 %+). However, for the BVetMed programme this indicator shows some dissatisfaction around support for study choices. One of the issues for the RVC is that due to the relatively prescriptive nature of our professionally accredited programmes there is limited choice of study options, particularly in the early parts of the programme, which may impact this indicator.

Tutors are an essential academic support mechanism which starts with the first meeting in Welcome Week.

Bioscience and Gateway students also have skills tutors (PhD or postdoctoral workers) who teach timetabled sessions to meet emerging needs for skills. The tutorial system includes designated international tutors on both campuses and is overseen by a team of senior tutors who provide support and training. Evidence of their impact is shown in the Student Barometer's high levels of satisfaction with personal tutors for both UK and international students (Table 10).

Table 10. Student satisfaction with personal tutors

Personal tutors satisfaction	2017 RVC (UK)	2019 RVC (UK)
UK students (SB)	91% (92%)	94% (92%)
International students (ISB)	91% (94%)	88% (94%)

Over the duration of their programmes, students are supported to undertake transitions such as:

- The need to apply theoretical scientific concepts to practical or clinical settings
- A change in educational contexts where knowledge checks provided a sense of security to the need to apply knowledge in critical reasoning scenarios
- A change to the physical location of learning (another campus or placement locations)
- Application of learning outcomes to real-world contexts

We have developed a number of innovative ways to support key transition points which complement students' development as independent lifelong learners. The Professional Orientation and Development (POD) programme supported the transition to the clinical years at our Hawkshead campus. It used an experiential, outdoor education approach to develop leadership skills, teamwork, self-awareness and an enhanced sense of community. Successfully run since 2017 these skills are now recognised as essential and are built into the curriculum. The initiative evolved into POD for VN students; InterPOD, for the whole veterinary team (medics and nurses) and a similar programme TRACC (Teamwork, Resilience, Adaptability, Confidence and Competence) for Biosciences students. Students valued the improvement in their teamwork skills, the sense of community and positive approach to wellbeing²².

The various Bioscience pathways offer choice and flexibility for students to graduate with a degree that reflects their interests, in particular, those who follow the BSc Animal Biology, Behaviour Welfare and Ethics and BSc/MSci Wildlife Health Sciences are able to undertake research projects (SE3) aligned with their career aspirations. Tutors provide guidance for study choices including external opportunities at Kings College, the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) and Nanyang Technological University in Singapore.

Lengthy periods of working with practitioners on placements represents an essential element of workplace preparation for BVetMed and VN programme completion (SE3). Students are asked to locate and book EMS placements with the support of a dedicated EMS team; a searchable database to review placement feedback, and guidance through the tutorial system.

However, we recognise these activities can place additional financial pressure on students, directly by incurring travel and accommodation costs and indirectly by limiting the amount of time available for paid work during holidays. To ensure students have access to support we continue to increase both the overall amount of funding and the types of scholarships provided²³ for placements, rotations and research (Table 11).

Table 11. Student funding and scholarship opportunities and awards

Student Funding opportunities	2018	2019	2020	2021
Student Support Fund	£28,250	£64,210	£80,564	£104,865
The RVC EMS+ Awards	£3000	£2600	£4450	£4000
RVC International Experience Scheme (IES)	4,976.03 Euro		3,483.22 Euro	

We believe that wellbeing is an essential resource that needs to be actively maintained when students are interacting in demanding new environments and thus a key aspect of academic support. During the pandemic we introduced *Mentoring for Wellbeing* as part of our mental health support offerings (SO2). We work with University Mentoring Organisation (UMO) who understand the difficulties that students may face and provide non-therapeutic practical support to help students develop techniques and strategies to overcome barriers. Uptake of this service has increased

and of those students report that mentoring has made it more likely they will complete their programme. During the pandemic we introduced 24/7 support specifically for remote study and placements:

- *Report & Support* online platform with a range of information on mental health and wellbeing.
- *Health Assured 24/7 confidential telephone service* - staffed by trained counsellors for out-of-hours support for all students.

2.2.3 Evidence of physical or virtual learning resources for teaching & learning (SE6)

We continue to invest in the physical and digital infrastructure for teaching and learning. Our result in the NSS question on learning support is in line and above the benchmark in years 1 (87.1) and 2 (88.3) when the benchmark value was higher. The benchmark fell in years 3 (78.3) and 4 (79.7) during the pandemic, and our values dropped below it (75 and 74.3) in line with a decline in satisfaction across the sector. However, this appears to be affecting the RVC to a greater extent than others; possibly due to the nature of our practical, work-place based programme and Bioscience students' disappointment with limited access to campus facilities due to government restrictions. However, in the most recent NSS, the score for Biosciences showed considerable improvement (22% increase in satisfaction, from 53.5% to 75.6%), probably due to these students being able to resume access to on-campus facilities. Improvement was also seen for the VN and Gateway BVetMed programmes. Comparing these values with Student Barometer data we see consistently high levels of reported satisfaction, with several categories exceeding the UK average (Table 12).

Table 12. Student satisfaction with learning resources
Resource - RVC (UK) 2019

Learning Spaces	91% (88%)	Online library	89% (93%)
Laboratories	97% (93%)	Technology	91% (91%)
Library Service	97% (95%)	Virtual learning	85% (91%)
Physical library	90% (91%)	IT support	90% (92%)

Our approach to learning support seeks to provide:

- Flexible and inclusive learning resources to meet the needs of a diverse student population and support our professionally accredited skills-based curricula
- Opportunities for social and collaborative learning on campus and online
- Proactive accessible student support to enable students to thrive in their studies

The RVC has made significant investment in its physical educational facilities over recent years. At the Camden campus, a £15M project created a new student centre, making it easier for students to access support, increased the amount of social learning space and upgraded the learning resource centre and teaching rooms. A £43M soon to be completed project at the Hawkshead campus will create two lecture theatres, a learning resource centre, a dedicated laboratory for the teaching of laboratory and clinical skills, group learning rooms to facilitate active learning and extensive social learning space²⁵. A new live animal teaching facility is also planned. Over the last 5 years, at Camden, we have increased social learning space by 20%, teaching space by 10% and recreational space by 30%. At our Hawkshead campus the increases have been 100%, 50% and 80%, respectively.

The RVC has unique facilities that allow students to access clinical training. At its most recent combined international accreditation⁷ the RVC was commended on the extensive array of clinical training opportunities it provided, noting they were amongst both the most diverse and the best in the world. One of these facilities, the Clinical Skills Centre (CSC) provides a comprehensive array of simulators, mannequins and haptic devices curated to support each student's programme. We have pioneered this approach to veterinary clinical skills teaching, enabling students to develop skills in a safe environment without risk to animals, while enhancing the precision of the guidance provided to the learner. The RVC staff have written the leading *Veterinary Clinical Skills Manual*²⁶. During the pandemic the CSC adapted its training offering to provide kits (SE1) for students to continue to develop their practical skills at home²².

The Learning Resources Centre (LRC) on each campus enables students to access multiple copies of print books, over 27,000 full-text journals and approximately 10,000 eBooks via the SCOUT (Search Content OUT) discovery tool and Open Athens. The LRCs are responsive to student needs through constant monitoring of use/demand patterns, varying opening hours around key examination times and adjusting loan periods (usually within 24 hours). During the pandemic the LRCs operated 24/7 to meet the needs of students in different time zones. We benchmark our library services using SCONUL (Society of College, National and University Libraries) (Table 13). They reflect changes due to COVID, variation in eBook licensing* and an increase in workstations to provide more flexible use of campus space for bring-your-own device users.

Table 13. Library resources 2018-2022

	Total library expenditure per FTE student	Reader instruction hours	FTE users per seat	FTE users per workstation	Total e-books purchased	Total e-books cumulative	Books per FTE student
2018-19	£469.60	790	3.8	6.8	3200	3200	15.45
2019-20	£449.88	790	3.8	6.8	2650	4850	15.66
2020-21	£393.54	67(due to covid)	3.8	6.9	3258	8108	15.67
2021-22*	£364.50	310	3.9	7.7	1658*	9866	15.63

Two key pandemic adaptations to support remote study were the introduction of a 'click and collect' service (Users chose print items online for collection from their chosen campus) and the extension of the scanning service to request print journal articles / book chapters. Online subscriptions were increased including full online access to the BSAVA Library, and access to JoVE videos.

Accelerated by the pandemic, the RVC continues to invest in the digital infrastructure for learning and teaching and the use of virtual resources and systems to support the Blended Learning Strategy (SE1) and data-informed student services ²⁷. This further enhances our flexible, inclusive and innovative learning environment and includes:

i) Digital learning solutions and systems to support flexible learning activities:

- **Folium**, online platform for students to reflect on development of Day 1 skills (SO4)
- **Learning Science** – an online platform for practical scientific skills. (SE1)
- **Lecture Capture** - (SE1)
- **Interactive learning objects 'CALs'** for self-directed learning are integral to the curriculum
- **Formative online quizzes** – (SE1)
- **Proctorio** – proctoring platform for online assessments (SE1)
- Increased use of **Digital anatomy resources** in the learning design during pandemic
- Biosciences "**Practical Skills Logbook**" for students to reflect on skills acquisition.
- **Reflective online writing blogs** to support professional communication skills.
- **Online Employability Health Check** for Bioscience students – (SO4)
- **KickStart pre-arrival online induction** – (SO2)

During the pandemic, when we used pre-recorded videos (SE1), the percentage of students who viewed the complete recordings demonstrates strong engagement (Table 14).

Table 14. Student interaction with Lecture Capture resources during 2020-2022

	Programme	2020/21 % of Complete views	2021/22 % of Complete views
Lecture Capture (Panopto)	BVetMed	59%	63%
	VN	66%	64%
	Bioscience	83%	66%

ii) Support, service and communication systems to support the student experience

- **Smarthinking** – 24/7 online writing support
- **TargetConnect** – our case management platform for appointment booking, feedback mechanisms, targeted support follow-ups and scaffolded learning pathways for Careers, Study Skills and the Advice Centre teams
- **The RVC app** – communication channel providing quick access to resources, FAQs, etc
- **One-stop shop Student Hub** to provide easy access to learning and support resources.
- **'You said... We did'** to communicate how feedback is acted on – (SE7)
- Increased access to **Otter transcription software** for students with learning differences

- **Togetherall** – Free access to RVC's mental health app

The RVC Digital Support Fund was introduced during COVID to reduce digital poverty by assisting students with the cost of essential equipment so they could engage fully with Blended Learning for example by being able to watch and listen to digital aspects (lectures, online assessments) and develop digital skills as part of our strategy. The fund can also be used to purchase 50% discounted laptops through the library.

2.2.4 Evidence of engagement with students, leading to continuous improvement (SE7)

The RVC is committed to working in partnership with our students to gather feedback through surveys, focus groups and workshops, to help us identify trends and to establish priorities for continuous improvement and future developments. We have developed many and varied ways to listen and respond to the concerns and contributions of our students.

Retrospective Voice by Survey – A range of **formal feedback surveys** (module, strand, rotation, year). If median score is below an agreed threshold a response is required by our Teaching Quality Committee (TQC), which confirms the proposed actions. During the pandemic **Blended learning surveys**¹³ to all students were used to identify issues of access and engagement. The results and responses were published on the VLE.

Student Voice by Representation – Opportunities for students to provide cohort specific feedback to the **Course Management Committees (CMCs)**, and to **all key RVC committees, working groups and to Council**. Trained **Programme specific SU officers** represent the views of groups of students and help to build both a learning and social community. Students as committee members are active and the impact of their view is reflected in the scope of the issues discussed and by well-reasoned cases for positive change. This has resulted in changes such as: Revisions to the clinical scenario structure (BVetMed); new support mechanisms for the Nursing practice logs (VN) and introduction of embedded teaching sessions to support starting a research career (Bioscience).

Student voice is also gathered through our **James Bee student-led teaching awards** (voted on by students annually) which recognise excellence in teaching and student support. As part of our pandemic response, we initiated **the Digital Learning Champions programme** which recruits students from each cohort to provide 2-way communication on learning and teaching issues between their cohort and LWB. The Digital Learning Champions also provide peer-led teaching and coaching to students and staff to develop confidence with the development of digital skills as part of our holistic approach to developing lifelong learners with a range of transferable skills.

We offer further opportunities for ongoing dialogue and points of contact including:

- **Meetings between years leaders and student reps at least termly.**
- **Open door policy for students** to meet with year leaders and course directors
- **Student Success Coaches** proactive calling during the pandemic (SO1).
- **Advice Centre as a key information hub** where students often provide feedback
- **Feedback opportunities to non-academic staff** – Professional services team have a 'no-bounce' email policy to work to resolve issues in the first instance.
- **Weekly meetings of key members of the Senior Executive Team with relevant members of the SU executive**
- **Online forums on course pages** – to capture ongoing feedback and ask questions

We use a variety of communication channels to respond to the issues our students have raised:

- **Reflective responses** - Year leaders produce a reflective response once/term.
- **You Said... We did** area on our VLE and the RVC App (SE5)
- **Daily then Weekly updates from the Principal** during the pandemic
- **COVID area of the website** to communicate specific changes.

During the pandemic several themes emerged, specifically disappointment from our Bioscience students who were unable to use laboratory facilities on campus (Section 1). Students also commented on the quality of recorded lectures (e.g., over-running or lack of captions). This informed staff development (SE4) and was highlighted in guidance. Students were uncomfortable initially with online proctoring software resulting in a set of FAQs on common queries being published and updated on the RVC website and the RVC app. Students raised key issues that fed into longer term developments such as the desire to have a personalised timetable (a timetabling improvement project is in progress); the cost of attending placements (new funding schemes – SE5), issues with transport in Hawkshead (new bus schedules); and concerns about the impact of the campus building projects (regular updates provided by email, the intranet and via student reps on the project group).

However, the results for the NSS questions on student voice have been consistently below benchmark across the 4-year period. The main issue expressed is not about opportunities for feedback but relates to knowing how the feedback is acted upon (Table 15).

Table 15. NSS scores for questions relating to feedback and the student voice 2019-2022

Student Voice	2019	2020	2021	2022	Overall
I have had the right opportunities to provide feedback on my course.	89	93	86	86	88.5
Staff value students' views and opinions about the course.	66	62	52	50	57.5
It is clear how students' feedback on the course has been acted on.	50	45	45	35	43.8
The students' union (association or guild) effectively represents students' academic interests.	94	96	94	91	94.5
Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course.	86	88	73	78	81.3

To address this, we have developed a new Student Voice Strategy²⁸ which provides a framework to explain how different types of feedback mechanisms assist the RVC in identifying short, medium or longer-term improvements. Students' views of their RVC experience and retrospective feedback surveys are essential to our Quality Assurance and Enhancement framework²⁹. The Student Voice Strategy seeks to align this work with new activities showing how the student voice can contribute to past events and future developments as part of our approach to listening to our students. New student voice mechanisms include the introduction of Student Panels for Development to provide feedback on proposed service or curricular developments. This will allow more students the opportunity to have input, through questionnaires or focus groups, on a defined proposal and then see the resulting decision. We are also increasing our capacity to use short pulse surveys to monitor and respond to immediate issues on an ongoing basis.

3. Student Outcomes (SO2, SO3 – SO1, SO4, SO5, SO6)

The RVC metrics for student outcomes on the TEF dashboard show evidence of outstanding quality with indicators for both continuation and completion broadly in line with a benchmark >95%. Our overall indicator for progression is also broadly in line with its benchmark. These indicators are direct measures of outstanding student outcomes. We focus our narrative below on outlining why our approach facilitates such good outcomes for all our students and explaining our approach to the other elements of student outcomes. We will take the opportunity to articulate our approach to educational gain in our students as we define it within our institution and evidence of its success. Our aim is to provide our students with the opportunity to develop the skills that they will require to

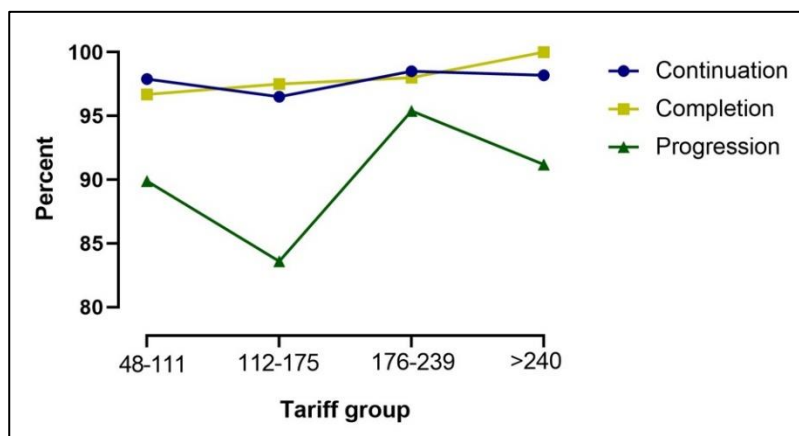
succeed. These include the skills required to succeed as a student, the skills they will need to become competent in to practise their chosen profession and the skills they will need to flourish in their careers; skills that are practical, cognitive and metacognitive. We outline below (and elsewhere in this narrative) the approach we take to skills development and provide clear examples of where, as an institution, we innovate and excel in these areas.

3.1 Evidence for Continuation and Completion student outcomes measures (SO2)

Our results in both the continuation and completion overall measures (SO2) have high benchmark values (above 95% for both). With an overall value of 97.2% the continuation measure over time is consistently above benchmark in each of the 4 years. The mixed ethnicity split indicator is notably above benchmark (+3.3). Completion is also over the high benchmark of 95.2% at 95.4%. Over the four-year period this measure has occasionally been slightly below the benchmark but is now above by 2.3 points (benchmark 95.8%, RVC 98.1%). There are two splits – other undergraduate level of study and course type (other undergraduate level 5+) where it falls below benchmark (-5.6 for each). This largely represents our Foundation in VN degree. As we showed in our narrative for the previous TEF, many VN students who do not complete their degree at the RVC go on to complete their training as a VN but by other means, via the apprenticeship route or through day release from employment. Therefore, this continuation score is not comparable to a complete discontinuation of studies but rather reflects a choice to complete those studies by other means and within the profession.

We have an inclusive approach to academic and student support to meet the needs of our diverse student population. All our support mechanisms and initiatives aim to make it easy and acceptable for students to seek support at any time. We encourage students to understand this process as part of problem-solving; best done proactively at the earliest opportunity to achieve successful outcomes.

Figure 3. Outcome measures by entry tariff



Completion rates for entry by age split over 31, is below benchmark by 2.5%. This group is largely represented by our Graduated Accelerated BVetMed cohort where students enter with a previous degree. We also note that the ABCS quintile value for Q1 is 3.2 points below benchmark. Although there is a slightly lower completion rates from students on the Gateway programme, a much higher % come

from high deprivation areas (below) demonstrating the effectiveness of the targeted support this group of students receive.

A key contributor to our high continuation outcomes, is the recognition of the importance of the first six weeks of campus life to later academic success and to student wellbeing. This frames our approach to the transition to HE study. We also recognise how different entry routes (Section 1) can influence students' expectations of university study. Many of our students have been highly successful in their school context but will need to consider how to adapt their 'successful' study habits to meet new challenges within a rigorous professionally-oriented programme of study.

To address this need, we have developed a skill-based longitudinal approach across the three stages (Pre-arrival; Arrival and Induction)³⁰ of the transition to HE to complement our skills-based curricula. In 2019 we developed a 5-week extended induction to prevent information overload during Welcome Week whilst normalising contact with the student support teams. This initiative aligned to the redevelopment of our student support teams to a proactive, accessible model where students were encouraged to make use of existing support prior to reaching a crisis point³¹. In 2020, we added a pre-arrival online programme (KickStart) to frame student expectations before they arrived. This proved essential for the 2020 cohorts who joined the RVC during the pandemic and who would be studying either partially or entirely online. Two key themes were 'how to learn online' and 'how to maintain connections and wellbeing' during the difficult times of isolation from campus activities. This approach supported students to understand how to make good use of the digital learning elements that made up a large component of the student experience during the 2020-21 academic year (SE1). In 2022 we integrated all three induction stages focusing on skills for success and checkpoints for development. Uptake for the online programme varied from 35-80% across sections³². Approximately 40% completed feedback and one noted "It introduced RVC as a community first, rather than only an academic environment". We continue to develop outcome measures of the personal development skills introduced during induction (SO6).

Our approach to successful completion of our programmes is aligned to the achievement of accredited competencies and skills (Section 1), Day 1 competencies for BVetMed³³ and for the VN³⁴ students (SO4). Accreditation reports from the BVetMed (2018), VN (2019) and Biosciences (2020) programmes testify to the rigour of these programmes and support our excellence in completion rates. A number of innovative transition supports (SE5) scaffold the development of a wider set of personal and professional skills and contribute positively to our high completion rates.

We recognise that students may experience challenges related to health, personal, academic, or professional circumstances during their studies. The Student Performance and Development (SPD) policy³⁵ provides a supportive process for students experiencing difficulty to achieve their academic and professional goals. The policy finds agreed ways for the student to continue or to take a break until ready to fully re-engage with student life and study. As a proactive support mechanism, it works in partnership with students to address their difficulties at the earliest possible stage and to make informed choices through active participation in the process. It is inclusive by nature, so students receive a non-judgemental and sensitive approach to the management of issues to enable the best opportunity to complete their programme. Offered online during the pandemic, trends and developments for the SPD process are reported annually³⁶ and have included: enhancement of the *Return to Study process*; improved data collection and creation of an SPD resource area in the *Supporting Students Toolkit* for staff (SE4).

3.2 Evidence for progression outcomes measure for students and courses (SO3)

Our results for progression outcomes for each of the three programme areas are broadly in line with the benchmark for the past three years most recently with a value of 88.4% (below by 0.7%). The day one skills^{33, 34} and educational experiences (SE1, SE3) that we provide allow students to seek and secure immediate employment upon graduation, a key aspect of our success in this measure. Key findings from our most recent Graduate Outcomes show that a large majority of our students were in paid employment (81%) or else engaged in a further course of study (10%) that they reported to find 'meaningful' (84%). This fitted with their career plan (60%) or else served to broaden their experience (9%). A 92% majority reported that their RVC qualification was essential for their employability. RVC has pioneered the development of VN degree programmes in the UK and since the last TEF has contributed to the recent reclassification of veterinary nursing as a "Professional" graduate level occupation. This is consistent with trends observed in previous DLHE progression metrics.

Our careers service and support offering has expanded significantly to ensure that we are providing effective, targeted support for all students. Many of our students are studying vocational courses with embedded placements and are gaining real life work experience while building employer networks. For these students we work to support successful completion of their programmes (SO2) and provide them with targeted career support including timetabled careers education and Careers Fairs (below). For students who seek an alternate career/study path, or those graduating from less vocational programmes such as the Biosciences, our support focuses on transferable skills and their applicability to a wide variety of career paths. We have an '*in science, with science and from science*' model to help students with their career decision making and planning. We then offer a range of employability interventions linked to career planning and preparing them for work (Table 16).

Table 16. Careers education, support and resources

Development	Outputs & Outcomes
Careers Steering Group - Chaired by a member of College Executive.	Shared understanding of RVC's careers & employability vision; and objectives for work readiness gains ²⁷
Diversified and increased Careers support offering	Transferable Skills maps – course specific (SO4) Redesigned VLE area with Careers Essentials Careers teaching on the Professional Veterinary Nurse module
New Careers Service Management System (TargetConnect) (SE5)	Easier access to appointment booking Increased uptake of careers services Targeted appointment follow-up to specific resources Ability to gather feedback after all appointments
Tracking of work readiness educational gain (SO4)	Students rate before/after confidence with career skills to track impact of session (ex. CVs, Applications, or Career planning).
Careers Events (Held online during the pandemic)	Annual on-campus Careers Fair for Vets and Vet Nurses (Average attendance: Vet 63% Vet Nurses 49%) Careers Week for BioScience students - A timetabled week of events including LBIC (SE3)
RVC Destinations	Graduate videos discussing post-RVC careers.
MapME	Online mapping of geographic location of graduates
Graduate calling	Post graduation careers support by the Careers team. Uptake is approximately 20%

3.3 Evidence for tailoring approaches ensuring students succeed and progress (SO1)

Student Success Coaches (SSCs) were an initiative developed during the pandemic as part of our whole university approach to creating a sense of belonging. We recognised students felt isolated and needed help to access resources and raise issues. SSCs

proactively called all students to provide a point of connection. They were trained to address issues of motivation and engagement with online studies while supporting students to develop their own problem-solving skills.

With the return to on-campus study in 2022, the SSC programme has been reframed and used as a new intervention to address aspects of study resilience and responding to feedback (SO5).

Whilst our overall approach to our diverse student community is inclusive, we recognise the need for tailored approaches for specific groups to scaffold success. The Advice Centre has a disability advisor to provide dedicated support for students who disclose disabilities on entry or at any point in their programme. We have a high rate of disclosed disabilities compared to the sector (Section 1) and have increased our mental health support and specialist mentoring³¹. We established an in-house counselling service

The Gateway Student Success programme (piloted in 2020) was developed to support continuation for these students (Section 1.2) and includes: online Summer Welcome sessions; academic support module 'Vet Careers and Communication'; transition and resit tutorials; Gateway-only RVC Equine placements and a bursary for under-represented ethnicities to cover accommodation and travel (SE5). This has resulted in higher levels of continuation and completion for Gateway students (Table 17)

Table 17 – Gateway continuation, completion and progression

Measure	RVC		Gateway	
	Value	IMD Q1&2	Value	IMD Q1&2
Continuation	97.2	16%	97.8	37%
Completion	95.4		91.7	
Progression	88.4		95.2	

The new Veterinary Nursing curriculum provides a specific Academic and Professional skills module to support those from more vocational backgrounds, as well as a Journal Club to develop a critical understanding of research (SE3). Taster sessions for the teaching hospitals were introduced in 2018-19 and have resulted in opportunities for inter-professional learning (SE5) and an increase in the number of Nursing graduates employed in our teaching hospitals.

3.4 Articulating the range of educational gains we intend our students to achieve (SO4).

The nature of our professionally accredited programmes means that a range of professional and academic skills (critical reasoning, problem solving, communication and reflective skills) are integral to our curricula (Section 1, SE1, SE3) with Day 1 competencies defined by the professional bodies that accredit them. The achievement of these skills is evidenced by our outstanding levels of continuation and completion (SO2) and the educational gain as shown by self-reported confidence and objective evidence of acquisition of clinical and practical skills. Institutionally, we define educational gain as ***the gains that our students make as they acquire the skills they will require to succeed and flourish while studying at university and subsequently pursuing their careers.*** Educational gain therefore covers multiple different types of skills which can be summarised as follows:

- 1) Study skills to ensure success as a student.
- 2) Practical and clinical skills: Practical laboratory skills for Bioscience students and day one competencies for veterinary nursing and BVetMed students.
- 3) Research skills (for all students studying at level 6 or higher see SE3)
- 4) Lifelong learning skills as part of personal development
- 5) Employability skills.

3.5 Our approach to supporting our students to achieve and evaluating these gains (SO5) and to evaluating their success (SO6)

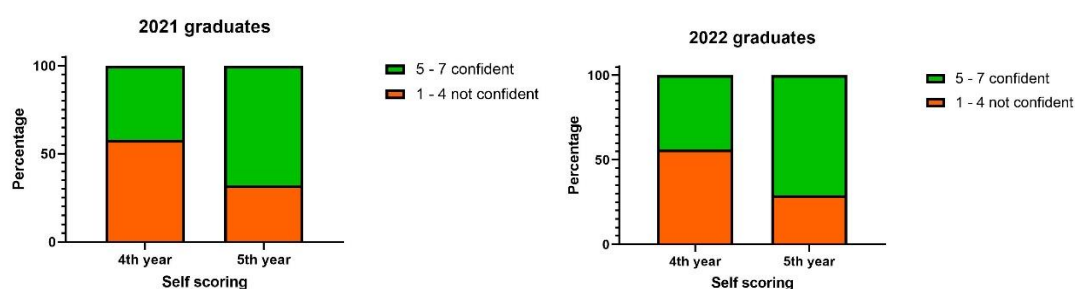
Our approach to the development and evaluation of many of these educational gains has already been highlighted in sections above (SE3, SE5, SE6, SO2, SO3). Given our high tariff intake and lack of degree classification for our BVetMed, "traditional" demonstration of educational gain is more challenging. Consequently, using the definition above, our focus is more on the essential professional skills and co-curricular development as measures of gain in our specialist context. Here we outline our approach to skills development and assessment, using examples to illustrate key points. Our development of practical and clinical (and other) skills across our programmes follows the model of Miller's Pyramid for skills development.

There are several key elements for students, common to all programmes.

- Reflect on and gauge their current level of competence at specified skills,
- Identify areas in which they are not yet competent on which they should focus,
- Have the opportunity to practise skills in a supervised or low-stakes environment (such as the Clinical Skills Centre or in a closely supervised laboratory practical class),
- Triangulate their self-assessment by undertaking formative assessment and discussing their current level of competence with their clinical tutor, skills tutor or clinical coach,
- Document the achievement of their skills with a course specific tool (e.g. Folium for the BVetMed, the NPL for VN students and the Practical Skills Log for the Biosciences (SE1, SE2, SE3, SE5)),
- Remediate their skills if they are found to be not yet competent in some areas (or if their opportunities to develop skills were more limited prior to attending the RVC), and
- Undergo robust and validated summative assessment to ensure that competence has been achieved prior to important progression points in their course, or graduation.

Embedded in this process is a reflective cycle; reflection, planning and action, and evaluation). This forces students to develop a metacognitive skill (learning to learn) them for lifelong learning as they undertake varied careers in a rapidly developing work environment. For example, the importance of engagement with the reflective cycle is reinforced in the BVetMed programme by a compulsory formative reflection on skills development before progression. As the figures for 2021 and 2022 BVetMed graduates below illustrate, confidence significantly increases (as expected) during the period of clinical teaching (Figure 4). This cycle has recently been introduced by the RCVS in the first year post graduation (Vet Graduate Development Programme).

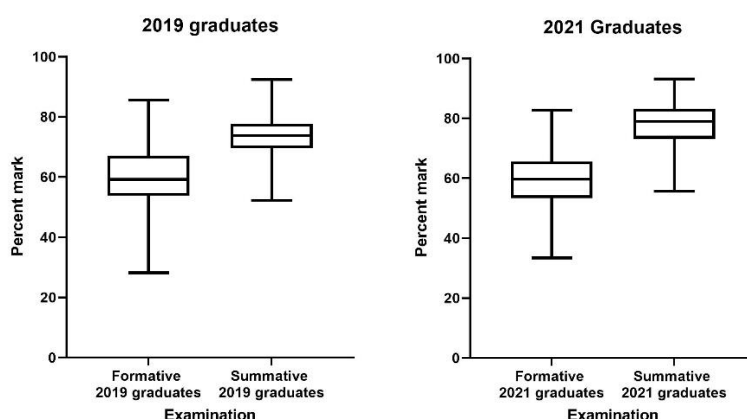
Figure 4. Progression of confidence levels in clinical students (2021 and 2022)



The RVC has pioneered many aspects of skills development and assessment (Section 1) including OSCEs (Objective Structured Clinical Examinations), and DOPS (Direct observation of procedural skills) which are used to assess competence with many practical, preclinical and clinical skills. Formative and summative assessment of similar skills allows clear objective demonstration of educational gain (Figure 5). Assessments are undertaken before and after completion of the rotation phase of the course. (Data not available for 2020 or 2022 graduates due to COVID,)

The resulting educational gain can be seen in the high and consistent achievement of confidence as our students' progress from zero skills ability to attainment and completion of their programme (with no significant drop during the pandemic) ready to practise in their chosen field when they graduate. The development of confidence in the self-rating of skills in Folium (SE1) further evidences educational gain of professional skills.

Figure 5. OSCE performance in clinical graduate cohorts 2019 and 2021



We are cognisant of the different starting points of some of our students when they join us and offer opportunities to remediate skills gaps in specific groups of students. For example, we do not require our Gateway students to have obtained animal-related work experience prior to entry; we run animal handling classes and assess their practical skills before they progress, thus ensuring their lack or prior opportunity does not disadvantage them in their subsequent studies.

Of equal importance is our co-curricular support. Here we aim to continue to develop independent lifelong learners with flexible, reflective mindsets who are aware of a range of skills needed for study, personal development, and work readiness. Through our support arrangements we consider how we can scaffold the development of these transferable skills and develop students who can demonstrate an ability to identify, reflect and adapt their own skillset to meet the needs of a variety of study and life challenges. This may mean adapting study habits to different educational environments (SO2); applying theoretical scientific concepts to clinical settings in professional environments (SE1); or adapting to feedback from professionals whilst on placement (SE3). Our definitions of educational gain for personal development with specific areas of focus and their rationale include:

- **Study resilience** – encouraging a flexible approach to study and the ability to adapt study habits and routines to new environments and demands. *Rationale: Students need to adapt their study habits for the rigor of a professionally accredited skills-based curriculum.*
- **Digital Skills Development** – understanding and building confidence in a range of digital skills needed for success in study (academic integrity, information literacy, productivity) the use of digital tools (assessment, research, study) and as a transferable work readiness skill. *Rationale: The pandemic shift online highlighted this need (SE1).*
- **Responding and using feedback** – recognising feedback and using it constructively in work and study to reflect and achieve positive outcomes. *Rationale: Our students receive feedback in many ways but may not always be aware how to use it effectively (SE1).*

These approaches complement our skills-based curricula (SE1) (starting with the skills-based induction, SO2) to encourage habits of awareness of what skills are needed, reflection on progress and planning to develop and evolve skills. To measure gain in these domains we use self-reflective quizzes and mid-year confidence assessments, as well as the scaffolded SSC pathways with outcome measures on specific topics (Feedback and time management SO1).

We are planning to progress our approach to skills development using e-Portfolios during the clinical years of the BVetMed. This will enable students to evidence and reflect on their own acquisition of skills (academic, clinical and professional) as they progress. The longer-term plan is to use reflective Portfolios across all undergraduate courses and as part of our co-curricular skills development.

Work readiness is very much aligned to the skills-based nature of our programmes (Section 1, SE1, SE3). To complement this, we continue to increase our capacity to develop an awareness of personal and work readiness skills for students in our less vocational programmes. To address this, the RVC pioneered an online reflective tool the “Employability Health Check”. Mapped to the curriculum it identifies the acquisition of employability attributes as they progress. It has an additional benefit of providing ways to gather evidence for future employers or postgraduate providers.

To further support our high progression rates (SO3), career planning and the development of work-readiness skills, we have introduced Careers Registration (a measure of learning gain) at enrolment³⁸ to provide targeted support for all (not only those who proactively engage with the Careers Service). Careers Registration will track career planning and support students by segmenting their careers resources (‘Explore’, ‘Plan’ and ‘Apply’) and ‘normalising’ non-linear career journeys whatever their starting point. For 2023, we are developing *Careers Insights Reports (SO3)*³⁹ which will bring together data on careers service uptake; Graduate Outcomes; and Careers Registration for the planning of tailored careers education and measure educational gain for work readiness on an ongoing basis. As part of the overall arc of support throughout the student lifecycle (induction; key transitions; graduation) we maintain and support our relationship with our alumni through RVC4Life. The 11,000+ worldwide members enjoy a lifelong link to RVC and often become ambassadors and representatives both at home and overseas. Alumni benefit from a jobs board; annual magazine; reunion events; 20% discount for CPD and PGT courses and access to their course material on the VLE for one year post graduation.

In summary, the RVC is committed to its student-focused, evidence-based, pedagogically rigorous approach to creating lifelong learners with the skills required to succeed in the careers our graduates pursue. With a leading international reputation but with the unique challenges of being a small specialist institution delivering high cost, clinical programmes serving the professions, we endeavour to apply the same principles to our provision as we expect of our students. To that end, reflecting, planning and taking action, and evaluating are central to our mission as we strive to make a good thing better – and the TEF exercise is an essential element of this process.

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