



## **British Veterinary Union in Unite response to the RCVS Proposals on Changes to EMS (AHEMS and CEMS)**

26<sup>th</sup> November 2022

The British Veterinary Union in Unite (BVU) welcomes changes to the guidance on EMS from the RCVS. EMS has remained relatively unchanged as a requirement of Veterinary education for a long time, and as a consequence, the systems have become outdated and pose a number of challenges.

The BVU supports and welcomes a reduction in the number of weeks of EMS required for Veterinary students. The RCVS proposals reduce the requirement from 38 weeks (12 weeks AHEMS and 26 weeks CEMS) to 30 weeks (10 weeks AHEMS and 20 weeks CEMS).

Whilst the reduction in the number of weeks will provide a small reduction in the financial burden on students, it effectively reduces the time burden by 1 week per year in the pre-clinical years, and 2 weeks per year in the clinical years. We do not believe this will have a significant impact on student finances, especially considering the current economic climate.

The current system creates a huge disparity between students from differing socioeconomic backgrounds, and a small reduction in weeks will do nothing to address this.

The BVU recognises that there are many stakeholders in the debates around EMS, and that finding solutions can be difficult. However, as an organisation, we feel that the utmost priority must be the safeguarding of students undertaking AHEMS and CEMS placements, followed second by ensuring the process of procuring and attending placements is fair and equitable for all students.

The BVU supports and welcomes the creation of a national database of EMS placements, as the first step towards reforming the process of matching students and placements together.

The BVU is concerned that the RCVS proposes the creation of a national database without a facility for direct student feedback. We believe that there **must** be a system in place for students to report unsafe placements directly to the database, and that by hosting such a database, the RCVS must be responsible for ensuring those placements advertised on the platform will not endanger students.

Whilst students can currently, and will continue to be able to, report unsafe placements to their Universities, the fact that students are still facing such unsafe placements as they are, means this system is not working adequately, and we would have welcomed an attempt to create change here.

Safeguarding issues raised to the BVU and other organisations, have included discrimination, sexual harassment and assault, aggression, violence and bullying, extreme working hours, as well as unsafe accommodation and working conditions.

The BVU is disappointed that the RCVS proposals use the term “quality assurance” when they mean a non-mandatory facility to allow students and placements to discuss learning objectives. EMS needs **real** quality assurance going forward.

**The BVU intends to publish our proposals on the future of EMS. If you are a member – student or qualified, and would like to provide input on this, please send your thoughts by email to [bvu@unitetheunion.org](mailto:bvu@unitetheunion.org) with the subject heading “EMS proposals” by 12<sup>th</sup> December 2022.**

