

# Strategy Statement



**SRUC**

SCHOOL OF  
VETERINARY MEDICINE





**SRUC has been working from October 2019 to scope the feasibility and develop plans to establish a new School of Veterinary Medicine. The first such initiative in Scotland in over 150 years.**

**The Gap:** Rural Scotland is heavily invested in Food and Drink, 20% of which is underpinned by the services (*Veterinary Public Health, Food Safety, Production Animal Health, Government Services*) of largely non-UK EU veterinary graduates (1,2,3). Veterinary and related professionals are essential to our Natural Economy, promoting animal quality health and welfare and the sustainability of remote communities. These priority domains struggle to attract and retain veterinary surgeons and lack capacity to service large but scantily populated areas (1,2,3). Rural and Food Production practices are neither subsidised nor likely to attract the support of Corporates. These paucities persist despite increased numbers of UK veterinary graduates and are relevant globally.

**The Problem:** ....may be attributed to misalignments between societal needs, conventional student selection criteria, student expectations and poor graduate resilience; conflated by adherence to established but strained, veterinary work practices. Failure to recruit students and retain vets better suited to these roles may be linked to the ubiquitous selection requirements for high entry tariffs across veterinary undergraduates. Students affiliated with priority careers (*including those from rural or agricultural backgrounds*) and likely more resilient in these practice and geographic situations, are effectively excluded from veterinary careers through isolation, lower academic achievements at school and socioeconomic influences (*including financial and ethnic background*) that preclude time spent in gaining diverse, pre-application experience. Supporting Scotland's Natural Economy requires a new and targeted delivery mechanism for the education of vets and related professionals

**Our Mission:** 'Providing a sustainable, resilient foundation for clinical excellence to support the animals and communities at the heart of Scotland's Natural Economy'.



**The Solution: Student selection and programme structure.** We contest that wider and targeted, access and participation can be achieved by the introduction of blended learning (*part distance learning supported by regional SRUC offices*) FE and HE programmes with clear articulation routes, enabling students to progress. These programmes will be attractive and easily accessible to rural students and to those aligned with the needs of our priority sectors. Participation will upskill students (*e.g. HND Rural Animal Health; HND Biosciences*) to expected standards in mathematics, chemical, physical and life sciences and for high performers, will offer access routes into a new form of Veterinary Degree (*or alternate degree programmes*). Importantly, participation in Foundation HND programmes enables socio-economically underprivileged and culturally diverse applicants to gain otherwise prohibited pre-entry scientific, animal and veterinary enterprise experience in a supported environment. We will adapt our entrance criteria for Veterinary Medicine to match our Mission by acknowledging alternative but valued prior experience.

Our Veterinary Programme will be unique in integrating deep awareness of sector fit through appropriate pre-entrance qualifications/experience and by capitalising on SRUC (*e.g. Agriculture, Animal Welfare, Business Management, Veterinary Pathology*) expertise as well as that of our wider Partnerships in Academia, the Food and Agriculture Sectors. This integrated approach uses an extensively Distributed Model from outset, empowered by our Scotland-wide network of campuses Veterinary Hubs and practices to develop work-ready, omnicompetent veterinary surgeons with the confidence, depth and agility of understanding to transition into priority areas. Use of blended-learning methodologies, soft-skills training and curricular inclusion of horizon-scanning digital and telemedicine technologies, prepares our students to lead the profession in innovative applications.

Campus-based teaching at SRUC will centre around our purpose-designed, Clinical, Anatomy, Diagnostic and Animal Skills Centre and capitalises on our network of local specialist enterprises and organisations. From this base we will co-train small cohorts ( $n=50$ ) of Veterinary Undergraduates alongside our Veterinary Nurses, Equine Studies and Animal Care professionals, Livestock Agriculturalists, Food Technologists and related para-professionals to achieve interdisciplinarity and embed the ethos and awareness of 'Vet-led Teams', 'Rural Practice' and 'Planetary Health'. Clinical training will be distributed across our pan-Scotland network of clinical practices, facilitating transition to and resilience in the workplace. We will offer tailored Certificates in Advanced Veterinary Nursing to further empower the Vet-led Team model to increase the reach of Rural Practices. The School of Veterinary Medicine will become a much-needed focus to support veterinary professionals in the North of Scotland, complementing and extending the repertoire of the established Schools to better meet Scotland's priorities.





## Programme Aims

We will,

- Widen participation and access through bespoke foundation programmes and selected external articulation pathways to attract and upskill veterinary applicants with the interest, aptitude and underpinning knowledge become resilient professionals in target sectors and the wider profession.
- Use blended learning pedagogical approaches in combination with a distributed model for professional skills and clinical training to instil the knowledge, skills and competencies required by new graduates for RCVS registration and in fulfilment of the degree of Bachelor of Veterinary Science.
- Generate omnicompetent graduates who, through progressive development of interdisciplinary knowledge and immersion in authentic practical and clinical applications, have the agility, empathy and confidence to integrate and apply their skillsets to achieve successful and resilient careers in support of the natural economy within the Veterinary Remote, Rural and Food Production Sectors and beyond.
- Create work-ready veterinary surgeons equipped with the team-leading and technical skills to address the challenges of the 21st Century.
- Instil the ethos of evidence-based medicine, life-long learning, self-reflection and the imperative to critically evaluate data driven and emerging methodologies.
- Deliver an outstanding student experience compliant with and responsive to the challenges of an ever-changing world.

## Links

1. C. Milne. Jan. 2020. Review of Field Delivery of Animal Health Services in Scotland. Scottish Government
2. D.Dabies & S. McPherson. May 2019. SPICe Briefing. May 2019: Brexit and veterinary workforce pressures – A perfect storm? Scottish Government
3. BVA Brexit and the Veterinary Profession
4. BVA Vet-Led Team report
5. BVA Vet Futures report