



partners in veterinary education

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Veterinary practitioners and Faculty are contributing to the future of the profession through a partnership in veterinary clinical training. This innovative new curriculum develops broad graduate attributes including problem solving, communication, teamwork and self directed learning, along with the skills and knowledge required for successful practice. The first four years promote student centred learning using case material to stimulate inquiry. Final year veterinary interns make the transition to practice through clinical rotations at University, private, government and elective placements, made possible through the generous contribution of the profession as educational partners.

Review of the first 6 months shows the program has been launched successfully, providing educational, administration and

online support that is meeting the needs of interns, practitioners and Faculty. Interns have enjoyed an outstanding experience in their external placements, thanks to the strength of commitment of our partners in supporting interns and providing opportunities for clinical learning. Interns' glowing feedback shows their gratitude for practitioners' concern and desire to help them learn. Interns appreciate the effective way practitioners have helped them gain new knowledge, attitudes and skills to become competent veterinarians and future colleagues. Partner practitioners and Faculty staff attending the PP conference in July were impressed with the contributions interns were making to practices, developing brochures, practice procedures, online resources and making presentations to clients, all part of their assessed tasks in communication for each rotation. We look forward to continuing to grow and develop this vital partnership into the future.

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the experience so far...

When asked to share my 5th year experiences my first thought was, "Well where do I start!" I am six months off graduation. Traditionally a final year vet student would be terrified of the thought of tackling their first job, however I am certain that this year's interns will graduate with a wider sense of clinical awareness and increased confidence in their abilities.

Having grown up in Toowoomba, I was keen to return to the sunshine state for my extramural rotations. The vets I have worked with have been absolutely fantastic. I have not had one difficult rotation so far.

With such awaited anticipation it is always daunting starting a new rotation, however it doesn't take long to fit into the practice's routine. The learning experience has worked both ways - vets have showed enthusiasm in furthering my education and where I could be helpful to a staff member they often learnt something too. The fourth week of rotation frequently comes around too soon, and I find myself feeling more attached to the practice than one would expect. Certainly a bonus for the staff has been the excuse for farewell cakes and cookies feast and of course some thank you presents to them.

I have enjoyed a wide range of practice types - from small animal practice to specialist centres to rural practice and so with that, a wide range of animals and procedures. I have investigated possible career paths in medical and surgical oncology, small and large animal surgery, ophthalmology, dermatology, emergency and critical care, reproduction, avian medicine and surgery, large-scale pathology and government biosecurity. The only problem with such an opportunity for diversity is I am afraid I cannot decide what career path to take!



the student
Tamara Barton

Approximately 40 practices responded to an extramural supervisor survey in June just



prior to the Partner Practitioner Conference and the results of this survey will be made available through our revamped Partners in Veterinary Education web site.

Dr Rob Churchill of Crookwell Veterinary Clinic has hosted two interns so far this year and believes the main benefits of the new program relate to the ability of interns to gain intensive practical opportunities and one-on-one supervision. Rob also notes that 'students are able to experience how different practices operate and discover at an early stage a variety of opportunities that their veterinary degree may offer'.

His main concerns about the new program are the time that

practitioners need to devote to help these interns and the potential disruption to the day-to-day operations of the practice. Rob has also thought about the potential problems from the intern's perspective, including added financial burdens of accommodation, travel and less opportunities for paid work.

Overall, Rob believes that his practice staff and clients have greatly appreciated the opportunity to work and interact with interns. 'We thought it would be great to acknowledge our clients formally and so we placed an advertisement in our community newspaper specifically thanking our clients for their patience and support', he said.

the practitioner

DR ROB CHURCHILL

All interns in final year spend one month in Rural Public Practice such as Rural Lands Protection Boards and Agriculture Departments. These placements enable all our interns to broaden their understanding of career choices available within the profession, particularly in the livestock industries.

Dr Jim McDonald is the District Veterinarian at Yass RLPB and has hosted four interns. He believes that while interns increase his workload they do provide a stimulus to organise more activities such as information days. Hence there are significant benefits to the local land owners, community and interns themselves.

For Jim however, one of the major advantages of the new program is the opportunity for dialogue between the current and future members of our profession. 'Both the interns and the vets get a feel for each other's perspective and the reality that our profession covers all sorts of people and interests', he said.

"The main difficulty with the current program from my perspective is the need to organise my schedule and offer placements so far in advance' he said. 'I understand the time pressures but it would be great if there was some room in the system to adapt to changing circumstances' Jim added.

the district veterinarian

Dr Jim McDonald



We have changed the look of the PP website in keeping with changes to the University and Faculty pages. The new range of features includes:

- **Save a supervisor report**
- **New and easier editing of practice information for the Profile Survey**
- **Advertise Positions Vacant**
- **Unit of study resources (more will be coming)**
- **Improved and more user friendly navigation**

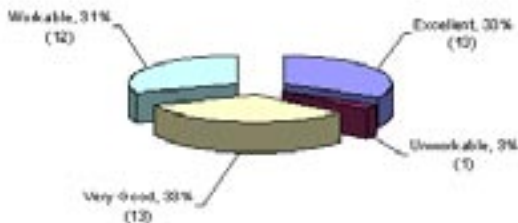
We appreciate any feedback from you about the website, so please do let us know how we can continue to make this site work better for you.

website update

A survey of extramural supervisors was conducted via the Partner Practitioners Website just prior to the Conference in July. We had forty responses and feedback on the program was very positive.

Overall, 66% of respondents rated the new one month model as either excellent or very good with respect to intern education. The most positive response came from rural mixed practitioners and the only unworkable response was from a zoological parks and wildlife placement.

Rating of the one month model with respect to intern education



extramural supervisor survey

Assignments completed by interns were generally regarded as being valuable although the clear indication from the Conference feedback was that these should be reduced. We are currently in the process of reducing written assessment tasks in response to feedback from interns and supervisors.

There have been some comments about improving the Supervisor Report Form from intramural and extramural assessors. So far, there is a strong correlation between intramural and extramural assessment using this Report. While 84% of supervisors believe the Report is very useful or excellent for pinpointing intern strengths, only 63% feel that it is very useful or excellent for pinpointing intern weaknesses. Further, 21% of supervisors stated that they are not sure if they would be able to identify an intern 'at risk'. Again, we are currently considering ways of improving the Supervisor Report Form to address these issues.

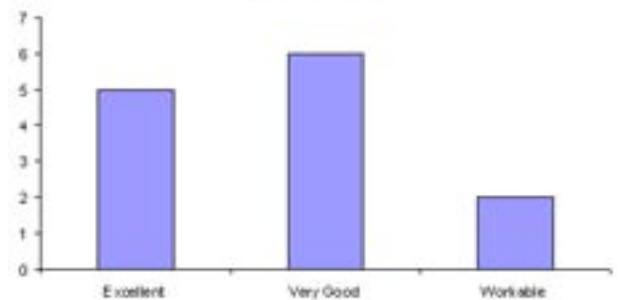
Summary points:

- 90% of respondents rated the report as very useful or excellent in terms of value to the organisation
- 71% of supervisors hold the initial interview within the first 3 days of the rotation
- 97% of supervisors approach this meeting like an informal job interview
- 74% rated the initial interview as either very useful or excellent for establishing a strong relationship with the intern
- 48% of supervisors hold the second meeting at the end of week 2
- 81% of supervisors find the second meeting either very useful or excellent for providing feedback to interns
- 90% of respondents thought the introduction letter and telephone contact prior to placement were valuable
- 60% of interns ask supervisors for advice on assignments
- 89% of supervisors discuss intern progress with other practice staff

Professional attributes rated as most important were interest in learning, communication skills and work ethic. Many additional attributes were provided and these included:

- Appreciation of business management
- Excellent scientific and people skills
- Employer expectations of new graduates
- Confident animal handling
- Friendliness and sense of humour
- Self motivation
- Empathy
- Confidence and logical thought

Rating of one month model with respect to intern education
Rural Mixed Practice



Personal professional attributes ranking		
Attributes	Most important	Least important
Interest in learning	51% (20)	5% (2)
Communication skills	40% (16)	5% (2)
Work ethic	37% (15)	8% (3)
Teamwork skills	35% (14)	10% (4)
Professionalism	22% (9)	5% (2)
Humanistic values	21% (8)	37% (15)

Overall, the major benefits of the new program included exposure to real life practice, practical experience, dealing with people and strengthening the bond between the university and the profession.

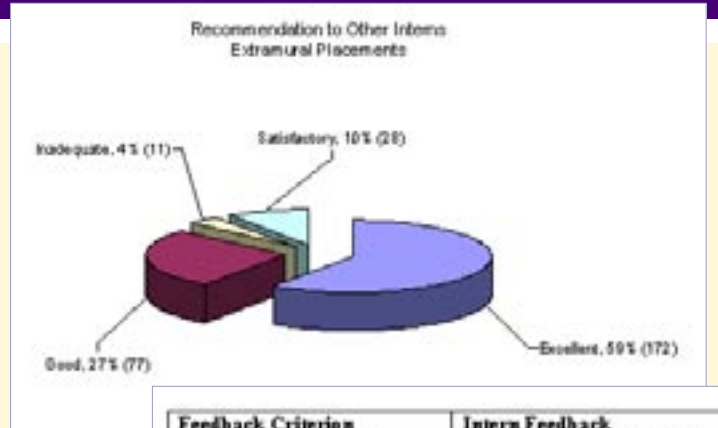
The major disadvantages identified by extramural supervisors were financial and time burdens on practitioners, financial and accommoda

extramural feedback summary

Intern feedback from extramural rotations undertaken during the first six months of 2004 has been outstanding. Open comments have been inspiring and the statistics reveal that the vast majority are enjoying a wonderful educational experience. Further details and more feedback from interns and extramural supervisors will be available on the Partner Practices website.

'The vets there are fantastic and the experience I gained met and exceeded all I hoped my rotations this year would yield. It is a testament to the potential benefit in educational and experiential growth which this year's structure allows. Thank you very much for helping make it a reality.' Andrew Peters

'I had a tremendous learning experience here. All vets went out of their way to include me in cases and give me as much experience as possible. Nurses exceptionally knowledgeable, patient and helpful. Thank you, I appreciate all your efforts!' Michelle Friend



Feedback Criterion	Intern Feedback
Achievement of Animal Management Learning Outcomes	Yes 97% (280)
Achievement of Clinical Management Learning Outcomes	Yes 91% (262)
Achievement of Professional Practice Learning Outcomes	Yes 97% (278)
Opportunity to Discuss Cases	Excellent 67% (192)
	Inadequate 2% (5)
Opportunity to Examine Animals	Excellent 55% (161)
	Inadequate 3% (8)
Opportunity for Practical Experience	Excellent 54% (155)
	Inadequate 4% (11)
Opportunity to Interact with Clients	Excellent 44% (126)
	Inadequate 7% (21)
Teaching Supervision and Discussion of Progress	Excellent 54% (152)
	Inadequate 3% (10)
Recommendation to Other Interns	Excellent 59% (172)
	Inadequate 4% (11)

communication tasks

The Faculty is committed to improving the communication skills of our graduates. Communication skills are particularly emphasised throughout the professional practice program from years one to three. In addition, seminars led by a clinical psychologist Dr Linda Beeney in semester 7 reinforce these skills and all interns are required to complete a communication task during each rotation.

Interns negotiate this task with their supervisor, although its purpose and some suggestions are given in the Handbook for Extramural Practice. The actual tasks reported are impressive for their range and versatility in responding to the needs of the respective Practices and client groups. Communication tasks completed so far include rounds presentations, developing forms for clinics, client mail outs, writing referral

letters, creating web pages, running puppy classes and writing an intern survival guide.

Interns highly value this task with many rating this assignment as either very good or very worthwhile. Intern comments include:

- improved my research and reporting skills, and confidence in public speaking*
- learnt much about veterinary practice in a timely, relevant and practical way*
- reinforced information learnt previously, or was a good revision of academic topics*
- learnt how to integrate textbook information and practical knowledge*
- made me focus on observational skills, as well as practise case presentation*
- good for discussing cases or presenting information to vet staff and clients*

conference debrief

We were delighted to again achieve registrations for this conference of around 100 partner practitioners and would like to thank all those that attended and contributed this year.

One of the highlights for us is being able to work with our partners to further develop and improve the educational experience for interns on intramural and extramural rotations.

A summary of your feedback will be placed on the Partner Practices website at www.vetsci.usyd.edu.au/ppIndex.php but we have already started to implement changes. We hope to have a number of Faculty handbooks available on the new site in the coming weeks. The Supervisor Report Form will soon have a new 'save' function and we have reduced the assessment workload for students to one written assignment (2,000 words) and a communication task for all rotations.

A new rotation schedule for 2006 is also being developed and will take in recommendations from the conference such as juxtaposing rural mixed practice and rural public practice rotations.

Thanks again for your contributions and we look forward to seeing as many of you as possible next year.

Barry Young (Gladesville Veterinary Hospital)

