

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 This Strategy constitutes the College's strategy for quality enhancement. To paraphrase the Quality Assurance Agency, this Strategy and the associated Implementation Plan set out the deliberate steps to be taken by the College to enhance the quality of students' learning opportunities. The educational philosophy and values that underpin the Strategy are set out in its first section.

1.2 The Strategy flows from the College's Strategic Plan 2014-2019, and builds upon the successive Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategies adopted since 1998. Evaluation of the previous Strategy, approved in 2008, indicated that the central principles remained valid; but that it was necessary to be more rigorous in prioritising what could be achieved, and to devolve more responsibility for implementation to course level instead of relying upon centrally-driven initiatives.

1.3 This Strategy is designed to contribute to meeting the Expectation of Chapter B3 of the QAA Quality Code:

*Higher education providers, working with their staff, students and other stakeholders, articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, so that every student is enabled to develop as an independent learner, study their chosen subject(s) in depth and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking.*

## **2. Link to other Strategies**

The LTA Enhancement Strategy links closely to other College strategies, in particular:

- i. *Quality Assurance Strategy*, through which the College assures the quality and standards of the totality of the College's educational provision;
- ii. *Human Resources Strategy*, with its emphasis on ensuring that staff engaged in learning and teaching are supported, recognised and rewarded appropriately;
- iii. *Estates Strategy*, which shapes the development of the physical facilities underpinning learning and teaching;

- iv. *Information Strategy*, which ensures that IT and related services meet the needs of students and staff;
- v. *e-Learning Strategy*, which ensures the optimal use of existing technologies and provides a roadmap for the introduction and development of new technologies;
- vi. *Research Strategy*, where research opportunities are embedded within curricula and provide opportunities for all students to experience authentic scientific research;
- vii. *Student Development Strategy*, which provides a framework of a student's holistic development incorporating the effective interaction of academic provision with those of tutorial and specialist services.

### **3. Aims**

The aims of the LTA Enhancement Strategy 2014-2019 are:

- i. To maximise the quality of learning, based on sound pedagogical principles;
- ii. To promote independent learning and logical reasoning skills along with the skills required for life-long learning;
- iii. To ensure that all graduates have the opportunity to acquire a range of both discipline-specific and generic skills that enhance their employability;
- iv. To continue to develop the learning environment, in all its aspects, to meet the needs of a diverse student body and thus both promote equality of opportunity and maximise student potential;
- v. To develop the use of technology-enhanced learning where this is appropriate;
- vi. To further develop assessment strategies that demonstrably reward the achievement of the desired learning outcomes, are valid and reliable, and that promote learning;
- vii. To ensure that all staff develop the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes and support to implement this strategy.

### **4. Maximising the Quality of Learning**

4.1 The primary objective of this Strategy is to optimise the quality of teaching and learning. The College will continue to employ the range of teaching, learning and assessment techniques that most effectively achieves this objective.

4.2 The College will continue working towards the following objectives in all curricula:

- i. ensuring the learning and teaching activities of the College are always focused on developing each individual's potential
- ii. ensuring that learning occurs in an evidence-based scientific context;
- iii. integration of teaching across disciplines
- iv. opportunities for increased depth of study in selected topics
- v. increased student choice of study pathways

- vi. developing students' professionalism
  - vii. developing students' digital literacy
- 4.3 Within our professional degree programmes experiential learning in the clinical environment will be structured such that students are an integral part of the clinical team, and have clearly defined learning objectives.
- 4.4 In order to optimise the learning experience gained from laboratory placements, supervisors and mentors should be fully prepared for their responsibilities; projects should be appropriately resourced, and students should be an integral part of the scientific teams in which they are placed.
- 4.5 We will use a variety of data to inform decisions regarding implementation of optimal teaching and learning methods and our approach will be informed by inputs from external experts, attendance at education conferences and workshops, and through engagement in organisations such as the Higher Education Academy.
- 4.6 We will identify and disseminate good practice in support of high quality learning and teaching, primarily through team teaching, the module review process, Annual Quality Improvement Reports, staff development workshops, team teaching and review of relevant staff development through the appraisal process.

## **5. Independent, life-long learning**

- 5.1 We will continue to develop teaching practices in ways that promote independent learning and the skills required for life-long learning. Students should spend more time learning and less time being taught. We will continue to deploy curricula and teaching methods that create the opportunities for students to develop the capacity to learn independently and at a distance, whilst maintaining an appropriate level of support and guidance that reduces as students move through their programmes. This involves:
- i. adopting a student-centred problem-solving approach, rather than relying on a teacher-centred didactic approach;
  - ii. using small group, independent, peer assisted learning and e-learning;
  - iii. providing a comprehensive programme of learning skills and support for learners;
  - iv. ensuring that staff give effective feedback, and students recognise and make the most of the many different forms of feedback they receive.

## **6. Employability**

- 6.1 We aim to ensure that all graduates have acquired a range of both course-specific and generic skills. Professional development will be a key feature of all our taught and research programmes. Each programme will define its

employability skills and career development provision for students to improve the competitive advantage of our graduates.

- 6.2 Through various forms of personal development planning students are encouraged to reflect on their acquisition of skills, identify gaps, and develop the skills they cannot yet perform to the required level.
- 6.3 The majority of our students are on courses leading to registrable professional qualifications, as a result of which employers have an understanding of the employability skills the graduates offer. We will more clearly define the distinctive attributes of the veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse who is a graduate of the RVC.
- 6.4 In respect of courses that do not lead to a registrable qualification, it is even more important that we define an explicit set of graduate attributes, and ensure that they are achieved; and that graduates are able to articulate and demonstrate them.

## **7. The learning environment**

- 7.1 The College will continue to develop the learning environment, in particular student support arrangements, to meet the needs of a diverse student body. The College is committed to providing, as far as possible, comprehensive and accessible student support services such as learning development, counselling and disability services.
- 7.2 With reference to our learning resources we will continue to develop:
  - i. real and virtual libraries through which students may access comprehensive information sources;
  - ii. audio-visual resources which enhance teaching effectiveness;
  - iii. classrooms adapted to our teaching and learning styles;
  - iv. social learning spaces and facilities for private study;
  - v. teaching hospitals carrying a caseload which is sufficient and varied in terms of both condition and species;
  - vi. active research groups in which students are supported in project work;
  - vii. archived specimens, case material and case records to support self-directed enquiry.
- 7.3 With reference to our College community:
  - i. we will implement the RVC Charter in a manner which continually encourages the explicit discussion of ethical and professional behaviour
  - ii. we will continue to develop and implement system to support students who are struggling to achieve professional behaviour which takes cognisance of best practice in remediation.

## **8. Technology-enhanced learning**

- 8.1 We will continue to develop the use of technology-enhanced learning where this is the most appropriate educational approach. We will use e-learning to free staff from excessive contact time used simply to convey information, and to facilitate flexibility in student learning. In this context, the teacher's role will include teaching materials development just as much as formal class contact and student assessment.
- 8.2 The e-Learning Strategy will support teaching and learning by:
- i. encouraging interactivity, problem-based and self-directed learning, while creating a nurturing and supportive environment for individual and group learning;
  - ii. supporting staff in the effective adoption and utilisation of new e-learning techniques;
  - iii. helping to integrate learning materials into core curriculum objectives;
  - iv. providing feedback through the use of computer aided assessment tools for both formative and summative assessment;
  - v. developing structured access to learning resources for students and staff both on and off campus integrated within agreed and prioritised initiatives.

## **9. Assessment**

- 9.1 The objectives of the College's Student Assessment Policy are:
- i. to effectively use formative and summative assessment to enhance student learning;
  - ii. to provide feedback to students so that they can build upon their achievements and learn from their mistakes;
  - iii. to determine whether students have satisfied specified learning objectives to the standard required.
- 9.2 Assessment is a crucial driver of student learning, and assessment strategy is therefore an integral part of the overall learning and teaching strategy. We will use a variety of assessment methods, including a combination of formative and summative assessments, as appropriate to the knowledge and skills being developed by each course. As students move through their course, they will be expected to demonstrate achievement of higher order learning objectives, building upon learning from earlier stages of their studies.
- 9.3 We recognise the importance of the concepts of validity, reliability and standards, together with load management, in shaping an appropriate assessment scheme. The validity of our assessment methods will be established through assessment blueprinted to learning outcomes. The

creation and maintenance of these blueprints – and the design of assessments – will be the responsibility of course directors and the Director of Assessment. We will monitor and assure the reliability and standards of our assessment processes through our Boards of Examiners,

- 9.4 Assessment processes will be transparent, with clear guidelines and criteria for assessment; students will be given sufficient notice of what is required of them; and both staff and students will have ready access to assessment regulations and related information.

## **10. Staff support**

- 10.1 Through linking closely with our HR strategy, we will ensure:
- i. that staff develop the necessary knowledge, skills and support to implement this strategy;
  - ii. that staff gain recognition for promoting excellence in teaching and learning.
  - iii. that through our behaviour-based approach to probation and appraisal we continually develop our staff as professional role models for our students.

- 10.2 We will:
- i. continue to equip academic staff with the “tools of the trade” by requiring new staff to complete the Postgraduate Certificate in Veterinary Education, or an equivalent course;
  - ii. continue to implement a comprehensive framework of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for academic staff, linked to the newly-agreed “Career Pathways”;
  - iii. identify annually a programme of topics for workshops led by both internal and external specialists, focused on priority areas in this Strategy;
  - iv. continue to support the scheme for peer observation of teaching;
  - v. expect all staff with teaching responsibilities to become Fellows of the Higher Education Academy;
  - vi. continue to award Educator Prizes, to recognise and reward excellence in teaching and pastoral care.

## **11. Prioritisation within the Strategic Objectives**

This Strategy encompasses a vast range of activity. In some areas this is already advanced, but in others, less so. At the outset of this Strategy, particular emphasis will be placed upon:

- i. Assessment and Feedback;
- ii. Employability;
- iii. Flexibility of learning programmes
- iv. Small group learning;
- v. CPD for academic staff.

## **12. Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation**

- 12.1 Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee (LTAC) will agree an annual implementation plan which will be delivered through two primary mechanisms:
- i. College-wide projects, driven by LTAC;
  - ii. Initiatives devolved to course level, in which each Course Management Committee will devise its own implementation plan.
- 12.2 Course Management Committees will report on progress towards strategic objectives in Annual Quality Improvement Reports. The Vice Principal (L&SE) will make an annual report to LTAC, and thence to Academic Board, detailing the progress made in delivering the Implementation Plan.