

Veterinary student debt and tuition fees

The British Veterinary Association (BVA) believes that the debt incurred by veterinary students during their studies will inevitably affect job choice on graduation. As the publicity surrounding the financial burden of training to be a vet increases there may be significant impact on the number of students choosing veterinary surgery as a career. This goes completely against the current government drive to encourage fair access to the professions. Student debt also impacts on graduate career choices and therefore also potentially on access to veterinary services in remote areas of the UK.

BVA position on veterinary student debt and tuition fees

BVA believes that the current financial provision for veterinary students must be reviewed to ensure that the impact on the future of the profession is minimised.

Currently:

1. According to the recent survey carried out by the Association of Veterinary Students (AVS), 32.4% of final year veterinary students consider themselves to be in serious financial difficulties.
2. The survey indicates that veterinary students are likely to graduate with debts in the region of £23,000 and the situation is likely to worsen as the government recently announced plans to lift the cap on university tuition fees.
3. Veterinary student debt is higher than average student debt as veterinary degrees run for at least five years, and at Cambridge six years.
4. In addition to the costs incurred by taking on a longer course, involving twelve weeks pre-clinical extra-mural studies (EMS), there are additional expenses for equipment and a requirement to complete twenty-six weeks of clinical EMS. BVA is supportive of the principle of EMS and believes it to be an essential part of the veterinary curriculum. However, most students are obliged to complete the majority of their EMS during university holidays, which reduces the opportunity for taking on paid work and also leads to travel and accommodation costs.

BVA believes that the impact of student debt could be reduced if:

1. Veterinary students were provided with robust financial guidance during their first year at vet school.
2. There was increased student loan availability for veterinary students.

Further BVA advice:

- Current Issues – Education:
http://www.bva.co.uk/activity_and_advice/1494.aspx
- AVS survey results:
http://www.bva.co.uk/student_centre/Student_survey.aspx
- BVA press release: <http://www.bva.co.uk/1525.aspx>