

What do employers think of graduates' skills?

By Alexia Yiannouli

MORE than 20 percent of employers believe new graduates lack appropriate surgical skills.

That was one of the headline findings from a recent survey that revealed particular concern from veterinary employers with regards to graduates' skills in spaying and neutering.

As part of the exercise, carried out by the RCVS and the Veterinary Schools Council, questions were asked to both employers and graduates in a bid to try and ascertain whether educational standards correspond with the profession's needs.

Despite concern over surgical skills, many employers reported confidence in their graduates' sedation and anaesthetic skills.

In addition, graduates themselves tended to report feeling confident when communicating with colleagues, but were less certain of the skills involved in leadership and teamwork.

A total of 45 per cent said they were unsure to what extent their

degree had helped them with communication, collaboration and empathy – despite the fact that 'soft skills' now feature heavily in course teaching.

Asked about financial and business management, more than half of graduate respondents said their time at vet school had 'not at all' or only 'slightly' contributed to their proficiency in these areas – findings consistent with a similar survey carried out in 2017.

Interestingly, 35 per cent of employers doubted their graduate's knowledge of running a business. One suggestion for improvement was sharing teaching resources between schools and encouraging students to find business-related extramural studies (EMS) placements.

Graduates were asked about their overall satisfaction with their education, with 80 per cent agreeing that EMS had helped them prepare for working in practice.

The survey also asked graduates and employers about resilience.

Those who had graduated between 2017 and 2018 were more likely to ask for help in the workplace than

those graduating in earlier years. This could suggest graduate resilience has improved in recent years but it could also be that employers view their graduates' resilience more favourably than graduates themselves do.

The survey consisted of two questionnaires. One was sent to employers who were asked to respond about their most recently employed graduate who graduated between 2017 and 2018, and a parallel survey was sent to graduates who had graduated between 2013 and 2015, allowing for a direct comparison of results.

The sample size of employers and graduates was low, with only 5 per cent of the total eligible graduate population (91 graduates) and 116 employers completing the survey. The exercise will be repeated to allow for direct comparisons between the views of employers and graduates over time.

- The full report can be found at www.vetschoolscouncil.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/VSC-Graduate-Employer-Surveys-2019.pdf ●



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