

**Jockey Club College of Veterinary
Medicine and Life Sciences**

Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine

Fitness to Practise

**A Guide for Veterinary Students and Relevant
Stakeholders**



**Jockey Club College of Veterinary
Medicine and Life Sciences**

香港城市大學
City University of Hong Kong

in collaboration with Cornell University



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Introduction

Veterinary students have responsibilities and privileges beyond those of most other student bodies. Trust is placed in veterinary students to conduct their studies and training competently, professionally and with integrity. The veterinary student is expected to represent the future of the profession, and they must be prepared for life in practice in a public-facing role.

The concept of being fit to practise is not just about achieving academic qualifications; it is about being of good character, being responsible and being worthy of the trust and confidence of the public and peers. In order to maintain that trust and confidence, veterinary students must behave in a manner that upholds the reputation of the profession and promotes animal welfare. In short, veterinary students must conduct themselves professionally at all times.

The Jockey Club College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences (JCC) at City University of Hong Kong, like all veterinary schools, has a responsibility to ensure that veterinary students are given the opportunity to develop their skills in a supportive environment and must address any fitness to practise concerns.

This Fitness to Practise Guide is produced for the benefit of veterinary students and relevant stakeholders of the JCC. The College is grateful to the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) and the UK Veterinary Schools Council (VSC) for permission to use their Fitness to Practise Guide (<https://www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/publications/fitness-to-practise-a-guide-for-uk-veterinary-schools-and/>) as a basis for this guide.

The JCC Fitness to Practise Guide is split into two parts.

Part One provides guidance for JCC veterinary students and stakeholders on recognising and addressing fitness to practise concerns.

Part Two sets out broad principles of fitness to practise, which students should follow. These will ensure that veterinary students are prepared for the requirements of being a member of a regulated profession and abiding by a code of professional conduct.

Part One

1 Recognising fitness to practise concerns and addressing them appropriately

This section provides guidance for the JCC veterinary students and relevant stakeholders on recognising and addressing fitness to practise concerns.

1.1 What is fitness to practise?

Professionals hold a position of trust and responsibility. The public expects professionals to conduct themselves in a way that justifies this trust and fellow professionals rely on their peers to uphold their profession's good reputation. Fitness to practise is about students demonstrating that they can practise their profession properly, safely and with respect for the trust and responsibility placed upon them in both their professional and private life.

The concept of fitness to practise applies to students who will enter the regulated professions not only because of the special position they are in throughout their studies, but also because the regulatory bodies need to be satisfied that their incoming members can demonstrate good character upon entering the profession.

Fitness to practise works alongside other policies within the JCC veterinary school, such as The City University of Hong Kong - Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine Code of Honour, referred to as the "Honour Code" throughout this document and Academic Regulations and Policies (found in the Student Handbook).

The Honour Code is a student-driven policy that covers issues dealing with academic integrity, student professional issues, and respect for personal property. Violations of the Honour Code are to be reported to a member of the Student Administrative board, as detailed in Article V.1.1 of the code.

https://www.cityu.edu.hk/jcc/sites/g/files/asqsls4416/files/media-document/JCC_BVM%20Code%20of%20Honour%20%28FINAL%29.pdf

The Honour Code works in conjunction with the City University of Hong Kong's Code of Student Conduct by the Student Discipline Committee (SDC). For more information:

<https://www.cityu.edu.hk/vpsa/studentlan/cscdp/cscdp.pdf>.

Concerns regarding possible academic misconduct, such as plagiarism or cheating, are addressed in the Student Handbook under "Rules on Academic Honesty" under "Academic Regulations & Policies".

For more information, refer to CityU's academic honesty requirements:

https://www.cityu.edu.hk/provost/academic_honesty/university_requirement_on_academic_honesty.htm.

1.2 Recognising fitness to practise?

The BVM Fitness to Practise Guide also works in conjunction with CityU's Student Development Services, which provides counselling services as well as providing information for the support of students with Special Education Needs (SEN). For details of the Student Development Services, please visit their website at <http://www.cityu.edu.hk/sds/web/index.shtml>.

For details of SEN support services, please visit their website at <https://www.cityu.edu.hk/sensupport/supporting-students-sen/support-services> and read the [Support Service for Students with Special Educational Needs \(SEN\) - Student Handbook \(cityu.edu.hk\)](#) for more information.

The JCC veterinary school has a responsibility to monitor their students' fitness to practise and take appropriate action if there are concerns about a student's fitness to practise. Fitness to practise processes must be used fairly and sensibly.

The JCC veterinary school has disciplinary procedures as well as fitness to practise procedures, and consideration will need to be given to which is most appropriate for a particular situation. It is possible for a matter to amount to a disciplinary issue without raising fitness to practise concerns and vice versa. In some circumstances, an issue may require both disciplinary action and consideration under fitness to practise procedures. In these cases, the disciplinary investigation should be completed first.

Where there is a serious or repeated concern about a student's ability to continue their course or their ability to practise after graduation, it is advisable for the JCC veterinary school to instigate a fitness to practise investigation. However, the following factors should be considered when deciding whether to commence fitness to practise proceedings:

- A student is not a fully-fledged professional
While high standards are expected of both students and qualified professionals, when it comes to matters of practice, in particular, allowances for learning and mistakes may be required. In a similar vein, consideration of the student's age and year of study may be relevant. In some circumstances, what may be of significant concern in a student approaching graduation may be more excusable and of less concern in a first-year student.

- Insight

When conduct or behaviour raises potential fitness to practise concerns, the student in question may not understand the implications of what they have done. A failure to understand why an action calls fitness to practise into question can be of concern in itself, as it may indicate an inability to appreciate risk and, in turn, a potential for repetition of the behaviour.

Insight goes beyond showing remorse and regret, it is about understanding why a particular conduct or behaviour potentially calls fitness to practise into question and what steps are required to remedy any shortcomings, as well as a willingness to engage with such steps. Insight may be demonstrated by self-reporting of concerns and engagement with any investigations. The veterinary school may consider that the student's insight is relevant to the treatment of the concern and the student's progression through the fitness to practise process. Insight must not, however, distract those responsible for pursuing fitness to practise concerns from investigating serious concerns. In some cases, despite the student having insight, the public interest may require a thorough investigation into potential fitness to practise concerns. In all cases, insight may be taken into account at the sanction stage as a mitigating factor.

- The public element

Understandably, deliberate or reckless behaviour, whether or not it causes harm or adverse consequences, is likely to raise concerns about a student's fitness to practise, unlike an incident that simply involves an accident.

To practise safely as a veterinary surgeon requires sound judgement, an ability to appreciate risk and an appreciation of the public trust and confidence in the profession. Deliberate or reckless behaviour, particularly where this results in harm, is highly likely to undermine the public's trust and confidence and, in most instances of such behaviour, it would be hard to justify not conducting a fitness to practise investigation.

It must be borne in mind that fitness to practise is not about punishment; it is about ensuring that animals and their owners are protected from risk.

1.3 Fair process

To question a student's fitness to practise is a serious matter; the consequences for the student could be significant. Those responsible for conducting investigations and making decisions must act with probity, balancing fairness towards the student subject to the investigation and the public interest in a thorough investigation.

Veterinary students should be informed about the JCC veterinary school's fitness to practise process and the circumstances in which concerns may be raised. Efforts should be made to reassure students that concerns will be dealt with fairly; this may encourage students to speak up if they have concerns about their own fitness to practise, as well as their peers. An efficient and effective fitness to practise process relies upon the reporting of concerns without a culture of fear.

The following factors are fundamental to a fair process:

- ✓ Full and accessible advice for all parties about the process and time scales
- ✓ Clear communication and regular updates for all parties throughout the investigation
- ✓ Separation of those conducting investigations and those making decisions
- ✓ Maintenance of accurate records stored safely and in accordance with the requirements of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance, Laws of Hong Kong (Cap 486) (PDPO): [The Personal Data \(Privacy\) Ordinance \(pcpd.org.hk\)](http://pcpd.org.hk) .
- ✓ Training for those making decisions
- ✓ Decision on impairment made before considering sanction and mitigation
- ✓ Provision of full reasons for decisions and sanctions, with clear written determinations and/or outcome letters
- ✓ Sanctions imposed using the principle of proportionality and considered in ascending order of severity
- ✓ Hearings to be properly recorded by way of transcripts or minutes
- ✓ Existence of an appeals process and information on this publicised

1.4 Managing risk

The JCC veterinary school recognises that being subject to a fitness to practise investigation can be a daunting and stressful experience for a student. As such, students should be offered independent support throughout the course of the investigation. The JCC's BVM Mentorship Scheme (see the Student Handbook) provides students with a mentor who can be contacted at any time. Other mechanisms include the student counselling service offered by Student Development Services ([SDS](#)).

A fair fitness to practise process cannot be rushed and will take time. In some cases, however, the concerns will be very serious, and there may be a real concern that the behaviour will be repeated, with the potential to cause harm to animals or the public. In these cases, very careful consideration will be needed to assess whether interim

measures are required to minimise any risks, such as restrictions on the practical elements of the course or even temporary suspension from the course. If it is considered that interim measures are required, these should be proportionate to the level of risk and should be periodically assessed for suitability as the substantive investigation progresses.

1.5 Making decisions

An investigator (*Fitness to Practise Officer*) will decide whether there is sufficient evidence to suggest that a student's fitness to practise is impaired, such that the case should be referred to the JCC veterinary school's Fitness to Practise Committee. This committee will then decide whether or not fitness to practise is impaired in accordance with these guidelines. If they decide that fitness to practise is impaired, the committee must then decide on an appropriate and proportionate sanction. Full and clear reasons for the decision and sanctions, with clear written determinations and/or outcome letters, should be given to the relevant stakeholders.

At the stage of considering an appropriate and proportionate sanction, the Fitness to Practise Committee should consider any aggravating or mitigating factors.

1.6 Graduation

Academic achievement and practical competence do not guarantee the award of a veterinary degree; a student must be able to demonstrate fitness to practise in all respects at the point of graduation. It is not possible to award a veterinary degree with caveats or restrictions. A student may not be able to graduate until the conclusion of any fitness to practise investigation.

2 Health and performance

Some concerns may arise from matters related to a student's physical/mental health or performance. Ideally, such matters will be identified and addressed before they become fitness to practise concerns, which may include occupational health, student support and personal tutors.

This guidance focuses primarily on veterinary students who have already enrolled in a BVM course. However, it is worth pointing out that in many cases, a student's health condition or disability will have been disclosed and carefully considered at the stage of initial application and selection for the BVM course. The Veterinary Surgeons Board of Hong Kong, Code of Practice for the guidance of registered Veterinary Surgeons (https://www.vsbhk.org.hk/english/rules/files/code_of_practice.pdf) requires veterinary surgeons to be able to give at least basic and emergency treatment to all common domestic species. An extract of this code is provided at the [end of this guide](#). Veterinary students are encouraged to discuss in advance their disabilities with the relevant parties at the JCC veterinary school during the admissions process and are expected to keep the school updated on any developments during the course.

In addition, students should take responsibility for their own physical and mental health; part of being fit to practise is recognising when your own health has the potential to jeopardise your ability to practise safely and effectively.

Health conditions (physical and mental) are likely to require sensitive management throughout the student's progression along the course, with regular discussions, reviews and evaluations of any adjustments made. Students should ensure that they attend their medical appointments and keep the university updated on any significant developments that may affect the adjustments put in place, or indeed their ability to continue the course safely. In addition, students should be willing to engage in any assessments that may reasonably be required to ensure effective monitoring of their health and any adjustments.

It is anticipated and understood that in most cases, health matters will not raise formal fitness to practise concerns. If, for whatever reason, despite adjustments being made and all reasonable avenues explored, concerns remain about a student's fitness to practise, it would be advisable to pursue the matter through the fitness to practise process. This is of particular importance in cases where the student fails to engage with treatment or shows no insight into their health condition. The safety of animals, the public and other students and JCC faculty is paramount.

3 Beyond student fitness to practise

Fitness to practise concerns extend past graduation.

For example, if students wish to practise in Hong Kong, they must apply to be registered with the Veterinary Surgeons Board of Hong Kong.

Students wishing to practise in other countries need to familiarise themselves with the requirements set by the appropriate registration bodies for that country.

Veterinary students should therefore be aware of these requirements and the potential significance of any outcomes of student fitness to practise investigations. Likewise, the JCC keeps accurate records of their investigations and decisions and cooperate with reasonable requests for information from various registration bodies in accordance with the requirements of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance, Laws of Hong Kong (Cap 486) (PDPO) [The Personal Data \(Privacy\) Ordinance \(pcpd.org.hk\)](http://pcpd.org.hk).

Part Two

4 Principles of behaviour for veterinary students

This section is for JCC veterinary students and sets out the broad principles of fitness to practise that they should follow.

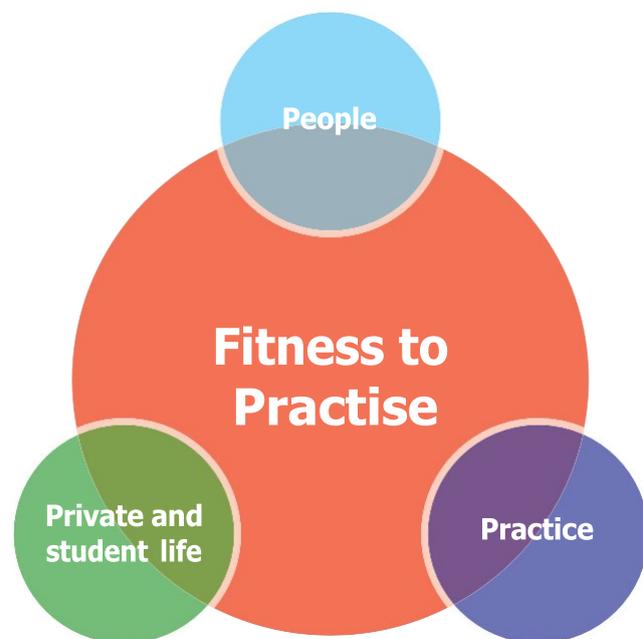
It is not possible or desirable to provide an exhaustive list of the types of professional behaviours that are expected of you as a veterinary student, or those that could call your fitness to practise into question. This guide therefore sets out broad principles and example behaviours expected of you in the context of three key areas of the study of veterinary medicine.

The principles set out in this guide are informed by some of the key principles of various

Codes of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons provided by various registration bodies, which in Hong Kong can be found in The Veterinary Surgeons Board of Hong Kong, Code of Practice for the guidance of registered Veterinary Surgeons (https://www.vsbhk.org.hk/english/rules/files/code_of_practice.pdf). The various codes set out veterinary surgeons' professional responsibilities.

The various Codes of Professional Conduct will apply to you when you register as a veterinary surgeon. Although you are not yet qualified or registered as a veterinary surgeon, you should familiarise yourself with the relevant Codes and aim to follow their general principles.

You should also familiarise yourself with the JCC Day One Competences (DC1) which include the RCVS Day One Competences (www.rcvs.org.uk/education/approving-veterinary-degrees) and the Australasian Veterinary Board's Council Graduate Attributes (<https://avbc.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/AVBC-Accreditation-Standards.pdf>). The DC1 set out, in broad terms, what is required of new veterinary graduates at the end of their veterinary degree, to prepare them for safe practice on day one of their professional career.



4.1 People

You will come into contact with a range of people in the course of your education and training. Maintaining working relationships is vital for practice and this will require effective communication skills and teamwork. You should begin to practise these skills with your fellow students, academic staff and supervisors.

4.1.1 Principles

- ✓ Professional accountability
- ✓ Honesty and integrity
- ✓ Independence and impartiality
- ✓ Client confidence and trust
- ✓ Respect

4.1.2 Behaviours

You can demonstrate you are fit to practise by:

- Communicating effectively with clients, the lay public, professional colleagues and responsible authorities; listening effectively and responding sympathetically to clients and others, using language in a form appropriate to the audience and the context
- Being open and honest with clients and respecting their needs and requirements
- Ensuring that you do not disclose information about a client to a third party, unless the client gives permission, or where animal welfare or the public interest may be compromised
- Working effectively as a member of a multi-disciplinary team in the delivery of services to clients
- Respecting the skills and experience of your supervisors and seeking their advice as appropriate
- Recognising diversity and respecting the cultural differences, values and beliefs of others, including fellow students, colleagues and staff
- Treating others politely, with consideration and with respect
- Recognising and respecting that other people may question your fitness to practise and demonstrating insight and engagement with associated investigations
- Being prepared to challenge the judgement of others if you have reason to believe their decisions could compromise animal welfare or safety

4.1.3 Concerns

Failing to demonstrate the above behaviours may raise questions about your fitness to practise. In addition, the following are examples of particular concerns that may

affect your fitness to practise:

- ✗ Breaching client confidentiality without proper justification
- ✗ Inappropriate or offensive behaviour towards fellow students, colleagues or clients
- ✗ Failure to respect a client's instructions or going beyond the scope of consent

4.2 Private and student life

The Veterinary Surgeons Board of Hong Kong Code of Practice for the guidance of registered Veterinary Surgeons

https://www.vsbhk.org.hk/english/rules/files/code_of_practice.pdf provides that veterinary surgeons must not to engage in any activity or behaviour that would be likely to bring the profession into disrepute or undermine public confidence in the profession.

As a veterinary student, you should also uphold the reputation of your chosen profession at all times and consider how your behaviour and conduct could affect the trust that the public places in the veterinary profession.

Fitness to practise encompasses not only your professional competence and practical skills, but also the way in which you conduct yourself outside the clinical environment. This includes your private life and student life.

Remember that wherever you are, you are representing the veterinary profession and your university.

4.2.1 Principles

- ✓ Honesty and integrity
- ✓ Maintenance of public trust and confidence
- ✓ Personal responsibility

4.2.2 Behaviours

You can demonstrate that you are fit to practise by:

- Taking responsibility for your own physical and mental health, seeking treatment and limiting practice if necessary, and communicating with your university
- Abiding by the rules and regulations of the JCC and other organisations linked to your studies
- Honouring commitments and taking responsibility for your work
- Attending mandatory teaching sessions or making alternative arrangements with the university
- Submitting academic work on time

- Not plagiarising the work of others
- Co-operating with formal investigations about you or others
- Disclosing to the JCC if you receive a police caution or criminal conviction during the course, in accordance with any relevant school policies

4.2.3 Concerns

Failing to demonstrate the above behaviours may raise questions about your fitness to practise. In addition, the following are examples of particular concerns that may affect your fitness to practise:

- ✗ Aggressive, threatening or violent behaviour
- ✗ Substance misuse e.g. drugs, alcohol and other substances that can impair performance
- ✗ Dishonesty, cheating or plagiarising, including dishonesty outside the professional role
- ✗ Criminal convictions or cautions
- ✗ Misuse of social media (see section below for more detail)
- ✗ Failure to seek medical treatment or other support
- ✗ Refusal to follow medical advice or treatment plans

4.3 Practice

Veterinary students, as part of their clinical training, are required to undertake acts of veterinary medicine. The Veterinary Surgeons Board of Hong Kong Code of Practice (CAP529) recognises that veterinary students may examine animals, carry out diagnostic tests and administer treatment under the direct and continuous personal supervision of a registered veterinary surgeon. Although you are restricted by law on the clinical work you can do, you must act professionally and responsibly during your practical training. Under supervision, you will be trusted to work with animals and clients, and you should be guided by the following principles of practice:

4.3.2 Behaviours

You can demonstrate you are fit to practise by:

- Making animal health and welfare your primary consideration when attending to animals
- Taking responsibility for your working practices
- Conducting yourself in a professional manner with regard to professional and legal responsibilities

- Being aware of legislation relevant to the welfare of animals
- Working within the limits of your competence and ensuring that you do not go beyond the instructions of your supervisor
- Being aware of personal limitations, and demonstrating awareness of when and from where to seek professional advice, assistance and support
- When in doubt, seeking professional support and, in the interests of animal and human health, recognising that you should not perform complex procedures unsupervised
- Ensuring that you are appropriately supervised when performing clinical or surgical tasks
- Providing care that is appropriate and adequate
- Being aware of the ethical responsibilities of veterinary surgeons in relation to individual patient care and client relations
- Respecting and maintaining client confidentiality
- Reporting any concerns about colleagues or patients promptly and honestly and to the appropriate person
- Understanding the need and professional obligation for a commitment to continuing education, training and professional development throughout your professional life

4.3.3 Concerns

Failing to demonstrate the above behaviours may raise questions about your fitness to practise. In addition, the following are examples of particular concerns that may affect your fitness to practise:

- ✗ Demonstrating a serious or persistent lack of insight into your limitations and lack of experience
- ✗ Deliberately ignoring or failing to follow instructions or advice
- ✗ Taking unnecessary risks and compromising animal welfare
- ✗ Purporting to have qualifications you do not have
- ✗ Falsely completing/signing documentation

4.3.1 Principles

- ✓ Professional competence
- ✓ Honesty and integrity
- ✓ Independence and impartiality
- ✓ Client confidence and trust

- ✓ Professional accountability

5 Use of social media

'Social media' is the term used to describe websites and online applications that encourage social interaction between users and content creators. It encompasses all technology that can be used to share opinions and insights, information, knowledge, ideas and interests, and enables the building of communities and networks. Examples include media sites that allow public posts and comments (e.g. Twitter), content sharing websites (e.g. YouTube, Instagram and Flickr), professional and social networking sites (e.g. LinkedIn and Facebook), internet forums (e.g. vetsurgeon.org), discussion boards, blogs (Tumblr and WordPress) and instant messaging.

It is recognised that social media are likely to form part of your everyday student life. They can be valuable communication tools and can enhance your personal and academic life. However, the use of social media is not without risk, and you should be mindful of the consequences that may arise from its misuse.

Veterinary surgeons have a responsibility to behave professionally and responsibly when offline, online as themselves and online in a virtual capacity (perhaps as an avatar or under an alias). They may put their registration at risk if they demonstrate inappropriate behaviour when using social media. The same principles apply to JCC veterinary students, and you must uphold the reputation of your chosen profession at all times. You should be mindful that you may jeopardise your position at university if you misuse social media.

When using social media, you should:

- ✓ Be respectful of and protect the privacy of others
- ✓ Be proactive in removing content that could be viewed as unprofessional
- ✓ Maintain and protect client confidentiality by not disclosing information about a client or a client's animal that could identify them on social media unless the client gives explicit consent (in certain circumstances, it may be possible to have online discussions about anonymised cases)
- ✓ Comply with any internet or social media policy or procedures set out by your university or employer

When using social media, you should avoid making, posting or facilitating statements, images or videos that:

- ✗ Contravene any internet or social media policy set out by your university (remember that comments or statements made or facilitated by you may reflect on

your university and the wider profession as a whole)

- ✘ Cause undue distress or provoke anti-social or violent behaviour
- ✘ Are offensive, false, inaccurate or unjustified (remember that comments which are damaging to an individual's reputation could result in a civil claim for defamation for which you could be personally liable)
- ✘ Abuse, bully, victimise, harass, threaten or intimidate fellow students, colleagues, staff or others
- ✘ Discriminate against an individual based on his or her race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion or beliefs, or national origin

Please note that this is not an exhaustive list. There are many different types of social media misuse.

In addition, students are required to comply with the JCC's Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine (BVM) Programme Social Media Policy for Students ([Appendix 1](#)).

5.1 Protecting your privacy

You should consider how to protect your privacy when using social media. It should be remembered that online information can readily be accessed by others and once it is published online, the information can be difficult, if not impossible, to remove. Added to this are the risks that other users may comment on the information or circulate or copy this to others. For that reason, it is sensible to presume that everything shared online will be there permanently. You should also be mindful that content uploaded on an anonymous basis can, in many cases, be traced back to the original author.

You should read, understand and use appropriate privacy settings in order to maintain control over access to your personal information. It is advisable to review your privacy settings on a regular basis to ensure that the information is not available to unintended users. However, you should remember that this does not guarantee that your information will be kept private and personal information could potentially be viewed by anyone including fellow students, university staff and clients and potential employers.

6 Veterinary Surgeons Board of Hong Kong: Code of Practice for Veterinary Surgeons Pertaining to Ethical Issues

EXCERPT OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE

A. The Principles of the Code of Ethics

1. Veterinary surgeons occupy a trusted and privileged position in society due to their unique knowledge and training. This Code of Practice is intended to ensure that this position is maintained by providing guidelines for registered veterinary surgeons based upon the following basic principles:
 - The welfare of animals is the primary concern of every veterinary surgeons.
 - The work and behaviour of veterinary surgeons should be of a professional standard acceptable to their peers.
 - Veterinary surgeons should aspire to uphold and foster public trust and confidence in the profession at all times.
 - Personal advantage should never be sought to the detriment of a professional colleague.

C. Professional Relationships amongst Veterinary Surgeons

4. General
 - 4.1 Veterinary surgeons have an obligation both to their colleagues and to the general public to conduct themselves at all times in a manner befitting the profession. This involves having regard to the interests and feelings of others and in particular not seeking to acquire an unfair advantage over a colleague by any act of omission or commission and, more particularly, not speaking or writing disparagingly of a fellow member of the profession to a third party.
 - 4.2 Veterinarians moving into new geographical areas or areas of activity should meet personally with their new colleagues so as to develop good professional relationships and promote fraternity. Continued social and professional contacts on a personal basis or at meetings such as those organised by the professional veterinary associations can play a vital role in this regard. (Amended Board Paper VSB 62/2020).

D. Professional Relationships between Veterinary Surgeons and Lay People (Other than clients)

12. Control or direction of veterinary surgeons by lay people
 - 12.1 Veterinary surgeons must not allow their professional judgment, integrity, discretion or conduct to be influenced by a lay person in any matter requiring the application of professional knowledge or skill.
 - 12.2 Whilst the Ordinance does not specifically prohibit lay involvement in practices, whether by partnerships with lay persons or by limited companies, section 16 of the Ordinance provides that unless practising under a permit issued under section 16(2), “no person shall practise veterinary surgery or provide a veterinary service in Hong Kong unless (a) he is registered under this Part; and (b) he is the holder of a practising certificate which is currently in force”.
 - 12.3 A registered veterinary surgeon should in no way countenance, help, encourage or assist, either wilfully or by neglect, a person to practise veterinary surgery or provide a veterinary service in Hong Kong in breach of the Ordinance, nor allow his name or qualifications to be used in such practice or provision.
 - 12.4 Save as provided for in section 13 of Part II of this Code of Practice, unqualified employees must not be permitted to attend a case for the purpose of diagnosis or treatment. (Amended Board Paper VSB 80/2012)
 - 12.5 It is unethical to be aware of illegal practice and not notify the Board. Registered veterinary surgeons have a responsibility to their colleagues and the profession to notify the Board of any professional misconduct that comes to their notice. Illegal practice may bring discredit to the profession as a whole and can have unfavourable consequences for animals and their owners.

E. Professional Relationships Between Veterinary Surgeons and Clients

16. Continuing Education – Need to Maintain Currency in Skills and Knowledge
 - 16.1 Veterinary surgeons should be aware of technical advances in the spheres in which they practise. A registered veterinary surgeon should not make significant changes in his/her field of work unless he/she has undertaken academic and/or clinical refreshment commensurate with the professional direction taken.

- 16.2 Continuing education takes many forms including attendance at conferences, seminars and workshops, regular reading of scientific publications, article summaries etc., discussion with colleagues including specialists, support for postgraduate foundations etc. Upgrading of knowledge ensures that clients are consistently offered the best options. (See paragraph 29 “Treatment of species or work in areas not normally dealt with”.)
- 16.3 In the event of a major change in professional activity or after a career break, veterinary surgeons should pursue a period of training or updating of skills sufficient to enable them to provide a full professional service.

F. General Ethics Relating to Professional Activities

18. Medical Records and Release of Information to the Board (Amended Board Paper VSB 50/2012)

18.1 Medical records

18.1.1 The medical record is the formal documentation maintained by a veterinary surgeon on his patients’ history, physical findings, investigations, treatment, and clinical progress. It may be handwritten, printed, or electronically generated. Special medical records include audio and visual recording. In the case of electronic records, the veterinary surgeons should adopt software which allows subsequent amendments to the records to be tracked (i.e. why and when the amendments are made etc.).

18.1.2 A medical record documents the basis for the clinical management of a patient. It reflects on the quality of care and is necessary for continuity of care. It protects the legal interest of the patient and veterinary surgeons.

18.1.3 All veterinary surgeons have the responsibility to maintain systematic, true, adequate, clear, and contemporaneous medical records. Material alterations to a medical record can only be made with justifiable reason which must be clearly documented.

18.1.4 All medical records should be kept secure. This includes ensuring that unauthorised persons do not have access to the information contained in the records and that there are adequate procedures to prevent improper disclosure or amendment. Medical records should be kept in fully accessible form for whatever period they may be

needed in order to be referred to by a treating veterinary surgeon (presumably the remaining lifespan of the animal concerned) or defending a civil action (generally there is a six-year period of limitation on bringing an action in contract or tort), whichever is the longer.

18.2 A registered veterinary surgeon has an obligation to assist the Board in carrying out its statutory duty of determining whether to refer a complaint alleging a disciplinary offence to an inquiry committee for decision by providing to the Board on request information and documents, including medical records, and test results, radiographs, ultrasound films and Magnetic Resonance Imaging images, of relevance to the complaint.

18.3 A registered veterinary surgeon has an obligation to comply with an order made under rule 28 of the Rules of Veterinary Surgeons Board (Election of Members) to produce material, a record (in whatever form) or a document. (Amended Board Paper VSB 62/2020)

20. Advertising Guidelines

20.1 Veterinary surgeons must not publish or broadcast or cause to be published or broadcast or be in any way involved in the publishing or broadcast of any of the following:

- Any claim by a veterinary surgeon of personal pre- eminence in the practice of veterinary science, unless as a registered specialist in a particular field of veterinary science.
- Any comparison with another veterinary surgeon in the practice of veterinary science.
- Anything derogatory or disparaging to any other veterinary surgeons with respect to the practice of veterinary science.
- Any claim in connection with the use of exclusive or superior apparatus, methods, material or veterinary products in the practice of veterinary science, unless the claim is fully supported by reasonable, responsible and respectable veterinary opinion.
- For the avoidance of doubt, notwithstanding any of the foregoing prohibitions, a veterinary surgeon may publicise his/her attainment of the target level of participation in Continuing Professional Development activities set by the Board in such manner as the Board may from time to time approve.

20.2 General media advertising must not include reference to inducements. Such

advertising may make reference to a veterinary surgeon's fees schedules and the veterinary services provided, giving the range of consultation fees for the veterinary services provided. Such published fees must truly reflect the veterinary surgeon's normal charges and be presented in a professional manner. The foregoing requirements apply equally to the content of service information notices displayed at a veterinary surgeon's clinic, published on a practice website or otherwise provided to the public. (Amended Board Paper VSB 99/2012)

- 20.3 Veterinary surgeons shall ensure that in any telephone, local business or service directory there is only one entry that advertises their services.
- 20.4 A veterinary surgeon will not enter into any contract or arrangement under which a person has the exclusive right to advertise, or to arrange the advertising of, the veterinary surgeon's practice as such to the exclusion of surrounding practices.
- 20.5 Any material a registered veterinary surgeon produces, procures the production of or otherwise has control over, which advertises his/her veterinary practice or provision of veterinary services, shall include in Chinese and/or English the veterinary surgeon's name in such a form as to make it reasonably practicable to identify the veterinary surgeon's entry in the list of registered veterinary surgeons published by the Board and shall also include his/her veterinary qualifications. The foregoing requirement applies to advertising material in whatever media, including (without limitation) print and electronic media and any name card the registered veterinary surgeon provides in the conduct of his/her profession.

21. Involvement with Commercial Interests

- 21.1 A veterinary surgeon who engages in a commercial enterprise that directly or indirectly concerns animal health or production must conduct the business in such a manner that veterinary ethical standards are upheld. Management of the enterprise should be such that the veterinary surgeon is not exposed to a conflict of interest between his/her professional integrity and the commercial pursuit.
- 21.2 The incorporation of veterinary practice makes no change to the responsibility of veterinary surgeons working under such structure to behave in accordance with this Code of Practice.
- 21.3 A veterinary surgeon who is in practice, or a lay assistant under a veterinary surgeon's direction, may sell goods from the veterinarian's professional rooms provided that :

- The display and sale of goods are such as not to diminish the public's confidence in the scientific integrity and impartiality of the profession and the standing of the profession in the community. (The veterinary surgeon has the responsibility to ensure that lay staff engaged in merchandising are adequately trained to advise clients on directions for use of the products sold and, in particular, to judge when the client should receive the personal attention of the veterinary surgeon.)
- The storage and sale of scheduled drugs and other restricted substances are strictly in accordance with the relevant Dangerous Drugs, Pharmacy and Poisons, and Antibiotics Ordinances or their equivalents.
- The mandatory labelling requirements of paragraph 22.4 of Part II of this Code of Practice are complied with insofar as they are applicable. (Amended Board Paper VSB 62/2020)

21.4 A veterinary surgeon in practice may own and manage a trading firm for the retail sale of drugs, animal remedies, instruments and/or medicated feed provided that:

- Advertising or letterheads by the trading firm do not indicate any connection with the practice.
- The name of the veterinary surgeon or the name under which the practice is conducted, and the title, degrees or address of the veterinary surgeon or indication of same, are not mentioned in any advertising or letterhead of the trading business, except as required by law.
- Any vehicle displaying an advertisement associated with the trading firm is not used routinely in connection with the veterinary surgeon's practice.
- The relevant Dangerous Drugs Ordinance, Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance, and Antibiotics Ordinance or their equivalents and the Veterinary Surgeons Registration Ordinance are strictly observed.

21.5 When a veterinary practice is conducted on the same premises as another commercial enterprise, such as boarding kennels and grooming parlours, the rooms and facilities should be designed and operated to prevent transmission of infectious diseases (planned traffic flow, vaccination of boarders etc.). Relevant legislation under the Public Health (Animals and Birds) Ordinance must also be strictly observed.

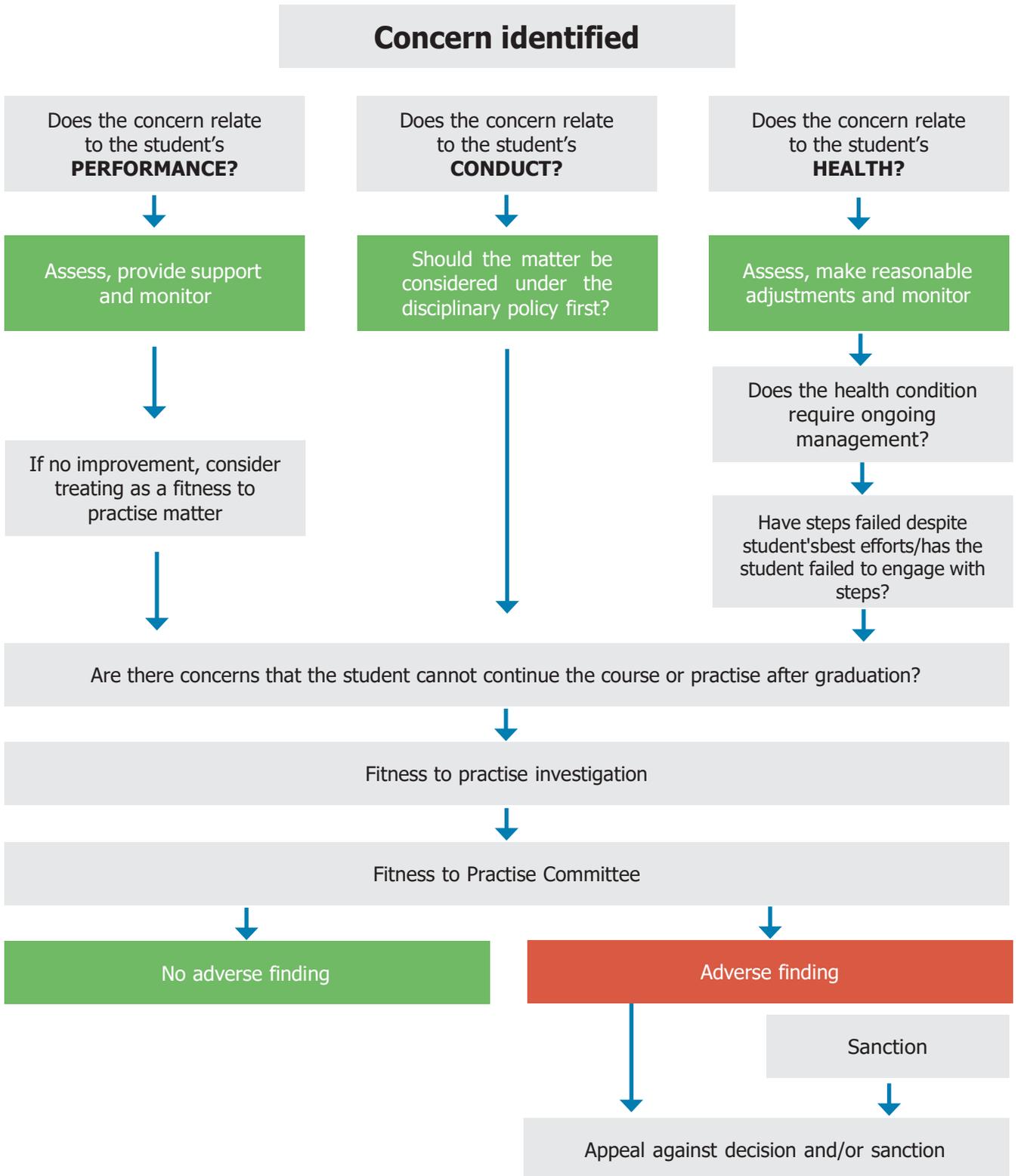
23. Provision of Services - After Consultation Hours/Telephone Access/Signage etc.

23.1 It is unethical to refuse to provide a service for the relief of serious pain or suffering of animals, although at times this may of necessity be confined to

emergency treatment and/or referral to another colleague. This involves a number of responsibilities. The most important is that practising veterinary surgeons, whether in a self-employed or salaried capacity and who provide a direct veterinary service to the public, must make adequate provision, at all times, for relief of serious pain and suffering in animals and for further treatment, when necessary, either by themselves or professional colleagues. Proper arrangements must be made for emergency services to be provided.

- 23.2 A practising veterinary surgeon should endeavour to ensure that the telephone is attended. When a practice is unattended, advice for clients regarding the nearest available veterinary service with whom prior arrangements have been made must be available. This may take the form of an advisory sign and answering machine message, diverting telephone system or lay person available to redirect clients to professional assistance.
- 23.3 Once a veterinarian has undertaken the care of a case, it should not be abandoned without good reason and without safeguarding the welfare of the patient.
- 23.4 Veterinary surgeons should not set exorbitant fees after consultation hours in order either to discourage clients or to seek financial gain in excess of what would be deemed commensurate with the service and effort provided.

Managing different types of concern



■ Finding that may affect registration and which the student must disclose to various veterinary registration bodies.



APPENDIX: 1

BACHELOR OF VETERINARY MEDICINE (BVM) PROGRAMME SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY FOR STUDENTS

The Jockey Club College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences encourages students to engage in the appropriate and responsible use of social media.

The use of social media provides a unique opportunity for students to participate in interactive discussions, engage with the wider community and share information using a wide variety of media. However, this can also pose risks to both students and the College. These include risk to the College's reputation and compliance with legal obligations. Students may also be at risk of committing offences or projecting an image that does not conform to their professional standards, which may have long term effects on their professional reputation.

To minimise these risks, the College requires students to adhere to this policy which outlines student responsibilities when using social media.

When using social media, students should:

- Be respectful of and protect the privacy of others
- Be proactive in removing content that could be viewed as unprofessional
- Maintain and protect client confidentiality by not disclosing information about a client or a client's animal that could identify them on social media unless the client gives explicit consent

When using social media, students should avoid making, posting or facilitating statements, images or videos that:

- Cause undue distress or provoke anti-social or violent behaviour
- Are offensive, false, inaccurate or unjustified (remember that comments which are damaging to an individual's reputation could result in a civil claim for defamation for which you could be personally liable)
- Abuse, bully, victimise, harass, threaten or intimidate fellow students, colleagues, staff or others
- Discriminate against an individual based on his or her race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion or beliefs, or national origin

Please note that this is not an exhaustive list. There are many different types of social media misuse. More details please refer to the RCVS "Fitness to Practise" Guide. Nothing in this Policy is intended to restrict or undermine the right to academic freedom.

Contact list

- For questions related to fitness to practise or general enquiries

Fitness to practise

Fitness to Practise Officer

General queries

JCC General Office

Location: 5/F, Block 1, To Yuen Building, City University of Hong Kong, Tat Chee Avenue, Kowloon, Hong Kong

Email: jcc.bvm@cityu.edu.hk

Phone: 3442 8948

- Contact options for a student with a concern such as health, academic integrity, mentorship scheme

Health and student support

Student Development Services

Location: 6/F Bank of China (Hong Kong) Complex, City University of Hong Kong, Tat Chee Avenue, Kowloon, Hong Kong

Email: sds@cityu.edu.hk

Phone: 3442 8090

Academic integrity

Student administrative board member or refer to

[Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine Code of Honour](#)

BVM Mentorship Scheme

Contact your appointed mentor to discuss your initial concerns