

VETERINARY COUNCIL OF IRELAND

STATEMENT OF STRATEGY

1. FOREWORD BY CHAIR OF COUNCIL

The Veterinary Council's Statement of Strategy 2016 to 2018 details how and when the Veterinary Council will fulfil its statutory role under the Veterinary Practice Act of 2005 and the Veterinary Practice Amendment Act 2012.

The Council committees in conjunction with our Executive team will be responsible for the delivery of the strategic goals on behalf of Council within the proposed timeframe. Committees and working groups will be able to co-opt relevant expertise in order to fulfil their roles.

The Council through its Committees and Executive is committed to operating within an effective system of corporate governance, and in partnership with stakeholders and the two professions in communicating its activities in an open and transparent manner.

I would like to thank all members of the Council, the Council executive and others who submitted their views as part of the prioritisation of goals and identification of Key Performance Indicators.

I wish the forthcoming Council every success with its implementation. By achieving our strategic objectives, animal care and public confidence is assured by means of a Veterinary Council that is competent in ensuring that registered persons practise to the highest professional standards.

William J Cashman
President
6 November 2015

2. BACKGROUND TO THE VETERINARY COUNCIL OF IRELAND

The Veterinary Council of Ireland (the Council) is a statutory body established under the Veterinary Practice Act 2005. This Council dates back to 1931 when it was originally established under the Veterinary Surgeons Act, 1931. The current Council came into being on 1st January 2006, and operates under the aegis of the Veterinary Practice, Act 2005 and the Veterinary Practice (Amendment) Act, 2012 (the Acts). Its parent government department is the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

As a statutory agency, the Council also operates under the provisions of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's *Public Sector Reform Programme*.

The principal function of the Veterinary Council under the Acts is to regulate and manage the practice of veterinary medicine and veterinary nursing in the State in the public interest. At present, 2534 registered veterinary practitioners and 725 registered veterinary nurses are licensed to practise by the Council. The Council discharges its functions mainly through:

- Specifying educational requirements and standards necessary for qualification in veterinary medicine or veterinary nursing, and approving programmes of education that meet these standards. At present, the School of Veterinary Medicine in University College Dublin offers a qualification in veterinary medicine, while there are five veterinary nursing courses approved by the Council.
- Establishing and maintaining registers of veterinary practitioners and veterinary nurses. Licence to practise is renewable annually.

- Maintaining up-to-date codes of professional conduct for veterinary practitioners and veterinary nurses.
- Specifying standards and approving programmes of continuing veterinary education. Mandatory continuing veterinary education (CVE) achievement is required by all registrants annually.
- Conducting inquiries into the fitness to practise of registered veterinary practitioners and veterinary nurses, and imposing sanctions
- Inspecting and accrediting veterinary premises. The Practice Accreditation Scheme (PAS) has been in operation since 2007 and is reviewed towards the end of each licensing period.
- The Council also acts as the competent authority in relation to mutual recognition of veterinary qualifications obtained in, or recognised by EU Member States and other appropriate bodies such as the American Veterinary Medicine Association (AVMA) and the Australian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC).

The Council is funded through income from registration fees and licence to practise fees, which it sets in respect of veterinary practitioners, veterinary nurses and veterinary premises.

The Council is made up of 19 members, 9 elected veterinary practitioners, 1 elected veterinary nurse and 9 appointed members. The appointed members are nominees of the Minister of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (4), the Minister for Education and Science (1), the National University of Ireland (2), the Director of Consumer Affairs (1) and the Food Safety Authority (1).

Much of the Council's work is done through the following committees:

- Veterinary Education and Training Committee (VETC)
- Veterinary Nursing Committee (VNC)
- Legislation and Ethics Committee (LEC)
- Fitness to Practise Committee (FTPC)
- Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC)
- Practice Premises Committee (PPC)
- Audit & Finance Committee (AFC)
- Conjoint Committee

3. THE VETERINARY COUNCIL'S VISION

Animal health and welfare and veterinary public health is promoted and the public interest is protected through a veterinary sector that operates to the highest standards of professionalism, and enjoys the confidence of the public and the professionals working in it.

4. THE VETERINARY COUNCIL'S MISSION

“Setting standards for the veterinary professions and ensuring they are upheld and implemented”.

5. THE VETERINARY COUNCIL'S CORPORATE VALUES

We hold ourselves accountable for our performance and the results we achieve.

We *aim* to be...

- Ethical, transparent and respectful in all our dealings
- Engaged proactively and productively with our stakeholders
- Open to change and progressive in the context of fulfilling our statutory remit

6. THE VETERINARY COUNCIL'S OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

Having successfully brought the provisions of the Acts into force, the Council continues to pursue its vision for animal health and welfare and public health through full implementation of the various provisions in the Acts. It is undertaking this work in a challenging and rapidly changing environment. The Irish economy is showing improvement. Unemployment remains one of the highest in the EU at 10%. Prospects for economic growth are improving – Gross Domestic Product growth is stronger than in previous years and is predicted to grow by 4.2% (Central Bank) in 2016.

The economic recession and the global financial crisis have dented public trust and confidence. The professions generally have also come in for critical scrutiny. The public now expects that independent regulatory bodies (such as the Council) will ensure that the professions they are regulating are demonstrating high standards of professional competence and behaviour.

The effects of the recent recession in Ireland resulted in reduced demand for veterinary services, with consequent effects on practitioners' and nurses' incomes. Since the beginning of 2015 there has been a noticeable, if small, increase in the numbers applying for registration. The demand for places to study veterinary medicine continues to exceed supply, and demand for student places in veterinary nursing is also buoyant.

The Council is entirely dependent on the income it earns from registration fees and licence to practise fees. Changes in the number of registrants has obvious financial implications for the Council. While it has the statutory authority to set registration fees at the levels it considers appropriate, the Council is always mindful of the impact of the current financial climate on its registrants, and seeks to maintain its fees at manageable levels.

The vast majority of veterinary professionals have accepted and welcomed the Council's role as regulator of the professions; however, the Council is also conscious of the challenge of effective communication with stakeholders. The introduction of the Council's Newsletter in 2012 represented a commitment to continuous improvement of communications. In an effort to communicate the value of the veterinary professions to a wider audience the Council sponsored a prize at the 2015 BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition.

The Council relies heavily on the active involvement of its Council members, who offer their services voluntarily, in spite of many other commitments and calls on their time. As the work of the Council continues to expand and develop, it is likely to be even more dependent on Council members to maintain their commitment and provide practical leadership to achieve the Council's goals and objectives.

The Executive of the Council comprises the Registrar/CEO and the staff of the Council, which currently comprises 4.5 FTEs (Full Time Equivalents). As the work of the Council expands, so will its requirement for organisational resources, especially its human resources, in terms of workforce numbers and enhanced skills and competencies.

7. THE VETERINARY COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC GOALS

Strategic Goal 1	To implement the provisions of the Veterinary Practice Acts of 2005 & 2012
Strategic Goal 2	To promote awareness of the Veterinary Council's purpose and vision
Strategic Goal 3	To operate to high standards of corporate governance and operational effectiveness

8.	STRATEGIC GOAL 1 (SG1): OBJECTIVES, PRIORITY ACTIONS AND KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS		
“To implement the provisions of the Veterinary Practice Acts of 2005 & 2012”			
<i>Objective 1.1 - Monitor and review standards of veterinary education necessary for registration</i>			
<i>Priority Actions</i>	<i>Key Performance Indicator (KPI)</i>		<i>Target Date</i>
Review the Council’s Registration Examination	1	Review List of Day One Competencies	Q1 2016
	2	Review current examination structure and content	
	3	Recommendations for changes	
Review the Council/EAEVE /AVMA Evaluation documentation	1	Compare and contrast the different evaluation documentation	Q4 2016
	2	Integrate the evaluation requirements	Q3 2017
Review policies and procedures for Section 44 registration applications	1	Audit annually compliance with the Registration Decision Tree	Q1 2016
			Q2 2017
			Q3 2018
Adopt Veterinary Nursing Registration examination	1	Design and draft a VN registration examination	Q2 2016
	2	Adopt agreed VN registration examination	Q3 2016
Monitor mutual recognition agreements	1	Establish protocol for monitoring Australasian qualifications	Q1 2016
	2	Implement protocol	Q2 2016
<i>Objective 1.2 - Specify & ensure compliance with CVE regulations for the purposes of continued registration</i>			
<i>Priority Actions</i>	<i>Key Performance Indicator (KPI)</i>		<i>Target Date</i>
Review the Council’s CVE Process	1	Review current regulations	Q1 2016
	2	Draft and agree new Regulations for implementation in credit year 2016-17 and seek Ministerial approval	Q2 2016
	3	Draft and agree CVE audit system for education providers	Q2 2016
	4	Draft and agree CVE audit System for registrants	Q2 2016
	5	Carry out audits in line with agreed schedule	Q3 2017
Review CVE Waiver System	1	Policy review	Q1 2016
	2	Implement recommendations	Q2 2016
Develop Year One Support programme for recent graduates	1	Design an appropriate Year One Programme	Q3 2016
	2	Implement Year One Support Programme	Q4 2016
	3	Review Year One Support Programme	Q3 2017 Q3 2018
<i>Objective 1.3 - Monitor and ensure continuing compliance with standards for veterinary premises</i>			
<i>Priority Actions</i>	<i>Key Performance Indicator (KPI)</i>		<i>Target Date</i>
Review current Premises Accreditation Scheme (PAS) Regulations and Standards which are in place until 31 December 2017	1	Set up working group	Q4 2015
	2	Working group review of the PAS	Q1 2016
	3	Prepare consultation paper	Q2 2016
	4	Consult with stakeholders	Q2 2016
	5	Review feedback	Q1 2017
	6	Communicate any changes (for implementation from 1 January 2018)	Q1 2017

Communicate the PAS Regulations and Standards to ensure all veterinary premises are compliant by 1 January 2018	1	COS Renewal documentation to all premises registered under the PAS by	Q2 2017
Ensure continued compliance of veterinary premises under the PAS	1	Ensure that all premises have been re-assessed by the end of the 31 December 2017	Q2 2017
Ensure all veterinary premises have renewed by 1 January 2018	1	Audit premises register	Q1 2018
Plan premises assessments	1	Develop schedule of assessments	Q2 2018
Objective 1.4 - Ensure the integrity of the registers for veterinary practitioners, veterinary nurses and veterinary premises			
<i>Priority Actions</i>	<i>Key Performance Indicator (KPI)</i>		<i>Target Date</i>
Ensure that registration applications are considered within the legal timelines as set out in EU Directive 2013/55/EU (amending EU Directive 2005/36/EC).	1	Register of Veterinary Practitioners – Audit annually section 42 applications	Q1 2016
			Q1 2017
			Q1 2018
	2	Audit annually section 43 applications	Q1 2016
			Q1 2017
			Q1 2018
	3	Audit annually section 44 applications	Q1 2016
			Q1 2017
			Q1 2018
	4	Register of Veterinary Nurses – Audit annually section 95 applications	Q2 2016
			Q2 2017
			Q2 2018
5	Audit annually section 95A applications	Q2 2016	
		Q2 2017	
		Q2 2018	
6	Audit annually section 96A applications	Q2 2016	
		Q2 2017	
		Q2 2018	
Ensure the accuracy and timeliness of the information on the Premises Register	1	Audit annually entries on the Premises Register	Q1 2016
			Q1 2017
			Q1 2018
Objective 1.5 - Ensure fair and effective processes are operating to investigate and take action where professional standards of practice may not be met			
<i>Priority Actions</i>	<i>Key Performance Indicator (KPI)</i>		<i>Target Date</i>
Conduct audits to ensure that agreed procedures and processes for investigations are robust and are being followed	1	Report and make recommendations from audits undertaken	Q1 2017
	2	Review Implementation	Q1 2018
Objective 1.6 - Ensure that the Codes of Professional Conduct are kept under review			
<i>Priority Actions</i>	<i>Key Performance Indicator (KPI)</i>		<i>Target Date</i>
Develop and promote the Codes of Professional Conduct	1	Publish relevant and useful guidance notes on professional standards	Q4 2016

9.	STRATEGIC GOAL 2 (SG2): OBJECTIVES, PRIORITY ACTIONS AND KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS		
“To promote awareness of the Veterinary Council’s purpose and vision”			
<i>Objective 2.1 - Ensure that the Council’s stakeholders understand its role, purpose and vision</i>			
<i>Priority Actions</i>	<i>Key Performance Indicator (KPI)</i>		<i>Target Date</i>
Communication with the animal-owning public and the profession	1	Publish key decisions of the Council on the website and provide advice on professional conduct in the quarterly newsletter	Q1 2016
Explore ways of ensuring and supporting a culture of Ethical Veterinary Practice	1	Review existing ethical offerings	Q3 2016
	2	Identify opportunities to support the culture of ethics	Q1 2017
	3	Identify and provide additional ethical tools and promote their use	Q1 2018
Improve acceptance and understanding of the complaints process	1	Monitor the process for complaints handling	Q3 2016
	2	Audit and record existing issues	Q1 2017
	3	Improve and develop communication mechanisms	Q2 2017
	4	Adopt and implement improvements	Q4 2017
Publish Indemnity Insurance Regulations	1	Draft regulations on Professional Indemnity Insurance	Q1 2016
	2	Engage in a consultation process with stakeholders	Q3 2016
	3	Draft final regulations	Q1 2017
	4	Seek Ministerial consent	Q2 2017
	5	Publish Professional Indemnity Regulations	Q3 2017

10.	STRATEGIC GOAL 2 (SG2): OBJECTIVES, PRIORITY ACTIONS AND KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS		
“Operate to high standards of corporate governance and operational effectiveness”			
<i>Objective 3.1 - Ensure that appropriate corporate governance processes and procedures are in place and comply with best practice</i>			
<i>Priority Actions</i>	<i>Key Performance Indicator (KPI)</i>		<i>Target Date</i>
Ensure compliance with corporate governance arrangements in the light of changes and developments in best practice in the area	Corporate governance policies and procedures reviewed annually		Q3 2016
			Q3 2017
			Q3 2018
Ensure corporate governance declarations are in place	All Council Members to complete declarations annually		Q1 2016
			Q1 2017
			Q1 2018
<i>Objective 3.2 - Ensure that Council members have the necessary skill set to enable them discharge their functions effectively</i>			
<i>Priority Actions</i>	<i>Key Performance Indicator (KPI)</i>		<i>Target Date</i>
Provide appropriate induction, training and development for Council members, especially new members	1	Training programme	Q1 2016
	2	Training programme	Q1 2018

<i>Objective 3.3 - Maintain and build the Council's organisational capacity to ensure continuing organisational effectiveness</i>			
<i>Priority Actions</i>	<i>Key Performance Indicator (KPI)</i>		<i>Target Date</i>
Continue to monitor the organisational capacity	Update organisational review document		Q2 2018
<i>Objective 3.4 - Ensure the Council's budgetary system fits its operational control needs</i>			
<i>Priority Actions</i>	<i>Key Performance Indicator (KPI)</i>		<i>Target Date</i>
Review present and future budgetary requirements	1	Budgetary requirements reviewed annually	Q4 2016
	2	Budgetary requirements reviewed annually	Q4 2017
	3	Budgetary requirements reviewed annually	Q4 2018