Author’s response to reviews

Title: The transition into veterinary practice: opinions of recent graduates and final year students

Authors:

Susan M Rhind (susan.rhind@ed.ac.uk)
Sarah Baillie (sbaillie@rvc.ac.uk)
Tierney Kinnison (tkinnison@rvc.ac.uk)
Darren J Shaw (Darren.Shaw@ed.ac.uk)
Catriona Bell (Catriona.Bell@ed.ac.uk)
Richard J Mellanby (Richard.Mellanby@ed.ac.uk)
Jenny Hammond (J.Hammond@vet.gla.ac.uk)
Neil PH Hudson (neil.hudson@ed.ac.uk)
Rachel E Whittington (Rachel.whittington@ed.ac.uk)
Ruth Donnelly (Ruth.Donnelly@ed.ac.uk)

Version: 3 Date: 26 August 2011

Author’s response to reviews: see over
Dear Dr Wyer

Thank you for the opportunity to further modify our paper. The reviewer’s points are addressed individually in the text below. We have amended according to the editors comments and modified our tables to two significant figures as suggested. An additional Table 1 has been inserted and Table numbering amended accordingly. The manuscript has been amended using ‘tracked changes’.

Yours sincerely

Susan M Rhind

Major revisions
Abstract needs to be shortened
Shorted where it can be - original expansion was to incorporate previous reviewers comments

Minor revisions
abstract methods. Were the thematic analyses verified by replication clarified that 2 researchers reviewed the qualitative data

Abstract results. Clarify which cohorts are referred to- ie student vs newe grads not various universities changed
Abstract conclusions. " recent grads..... Singular is not plural are changed

Background paragraph 2
" have become increaingly present" does not accurately describe the vet ed situation as these GA are used in curriculum design and demonstration of outcomes for accreditation. Agree however this point was made to be relevant to higher education in the most generic sense.
Para 2 another major argument has been the high attrition rates from early practice shown in work of Trevor Heath published in Aust Vet Journal which was linked to poor early experience and lack of satisfaction with practice. Additional ref now included

Methods paragraph 1. Clarify meaning of "students in the preceding cohort.." Preceding this study? Now clarified – year preceding this study.

Methods stats. Why were the two different analyses conducted on same data?
The two analyses were carried out on advice from our project statistician in recognition of the fact that participants were not trained in the distinction between the different Likert scale categories.

Quantitative data analysis. The discussions were transcribed (not the groups) changed
Were the analyses of themes undertaken by one researcher validated by a second observer? Yes
how were the themes and sub themes arrived by input from more than one researcher? What were the measures of repeatability and reliability eg were findings replicated by one or more researchers and was data analyzed without knowledge of it's cohort source?
The question here is, how confident can we be that the qualitative methodology is sufficiently well described and robust to make it possible to replicate by others?
Researchers were aware of the source of the data but we did not consider this would bias the interpretation. One researcher independently sorted and analysed the data and this was then carried out separately by the second researcher and consensus discussion established the final themes.

Results limitations
Much of this new material is discussion rather than results and needs to be Moved
This was added here at the request of the editor

Discussion
Para 1 in discussing why the authors focus on attributes considered very impt - it's worth noting that these were attributes at the foreground of the student or graduates attention and focus as they struggle to reach level of desired competence - which helps to justify this approach to data analysis not sure I understand this and seems a complicated argument to add in so we have elected to leave the text as it stands.

Para 2 the literature on grad attributes goes much further than this discussion implies it reveals that GA are most effectively developed when they underpin not just what is taught but how students learn and become less effective when viewed as being external to the curriculum content. See Simon Barrie's phenomenographic research on grad Att A comment on this would link well to point in paragraph 3 extra reference added
Para 4. Statement implies it might be a local issue at UC davis where walsh study was conducted. There is wider evidence than this that students are concerned about technical skills while employers are much additional reference added.