Reviewer's report

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

Version: 1 Date: 31 May 2011

Reviewer: Henry Annandale

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions:

A major differentiating factor in this manuscript is the exploration of the attributes that are rated very low by recent graduates and final year students. I would argue that it can be expected that FYS would see these as of lesser importance, but believe that the RG responses would need to be contextualised to the type of practice/veterinary activity they are involved in i.e. large referral practice or two-man branch etc. This would surely have an impact on time available to read up on cases and therefore the relative importance of veterinary clinical knowledge and research skills.

Minor essential revisions:

I found sentence construction to complicate understanding from time to time - see for example lines 6-10 in "Background". Also, 3rd paragraph of discussion, second last sentence - there are too many arguments in the sentence, making understanding difficult. I would try to reduce the number of arguments per sentence to one only. In this paragraph, reference is also made to an appreciation of the importance of communication skills in client compliance. This seems logical, however I did not find any evidence supporting the claim. Did any RG / FYS comment on this? If so, such a statement/data needs to be presented.

I think that the article would read much easier if repetition of certain phrases were reduced. "it is clear" in two sentences after each other just doesn't read nicely and creates the impression that the authors are "rambling on".

Spelling mistake in line 2 of "Relative ranking of attributes" - I believe it should be "an" instead of "at". There also seems to be inconsistent use of "competences" and "competencies". I would suggest to stick to "competences". I wouldn't use the word "unpack", even in parentheses, but would replace it with "explore" or "explain".

Discretionary revisions:

I am curious about the understanding (my own, the authors' and of course the respondents') of the attributes "problem solving skills" and "decision making skills". A lot of this is, in my opinion, contingent upon veterinary clinical knowledge, and I believe that there could be confounding of data. Perhaps, a more in-depth evaluation of these concepts could be considered in future
research? I don't think this can be changed in the current article, but do believe it is something which might be mentioned as a limitation of the current study.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.