The Royal Veterinary College (RVC) is offering vets the chance to ask questions about enhancing their career and gaining specialist knowledge through its distance learning programmes.

THE RVC’s programme in livestock health and production is aimed at veterinarians, animal health specialists and livestock farmers, and addresses contemporary issues of livestock production, while its programme on veterinary epidemiology and public health will provide animal health specialists, epidemiologists and public health specialists with an understanding of the conceptual basis of veterinary epidemiology and public health. Both programmes are modular, thereby allowing participants to study at their own pace by taking a single module or building up to a postgraduate certificate, postgraduate diploma or a Masters.

The stand alone CPD modules allow participants to get a taste of what it is like to study before committing to a full degree. They can choose from 35-hour, 50-hour or 240-hour individual modules, and these may be studied for career development purposes only. However, on successful completion of a 240-hour individual module, it is possible to use this as a credit towards further studies with the programme.

The RVC believes that its animal welfare module, which forms part of the livestock health and production programme, could be of interest to the majority of vets; it says that this module aims to give vets a balanced overview of welfare and ethics of farm, companion, competition, wildlife and laboratory animals, by “challenging analytical thinking and judgement within today’s social and agricultural context”.

The modular format offer vets the opportunity to continue their professional and academic development. Achieving the qualifications also provides an opportunity for new or enhanced career prospects.

Supported learning
Course participants receive a printed study pack and online resources, which include a discussion board and academic tutorials, plus support from RVC staff.

Any questions?
To find out more about what the programme involves, the RVC is holding an online question and answer session on Thursday October 18, when experts will be on hand to answer questions of an academic or administrative nature.

For those thinking about applying for the MSc, postgraduate diploma or postgraduate...
Ten-minute chat

Declan O’Rourke is a veterinary consultant and a member of the BVA Board. He holds an MBA and is a fellow of the RCVS; he will be retiring from the BVA Board in December.

What made you apply to join the BVA Board?
I had spent over 20 years in industry and felt that the experience I gained there would translate well to the BVA Board.

How did you get to where you are today?
Although from a city background in an agricultural country I opted to go to Dublin Vet School despite everyone telling me that medicine was the degree to pick. Following a couple of years in practice, in England and Canada, I moved to the Milk Marketing Board. Then I took the bold step of moving to industry – a move to this day I never regret. For the next 20 years I worked in a variety of roles – technical, marketing, product development and manufacturing. In some of these jobs I was miles away from my veterinary roots – building, scale up of manufacturing and then site manager for two new vaccine production facilities – but the experience I gained was second to none. In 2006 I left industry and set up my own consultancy.

What does the Board do?
In essence, our role is to ensure that the experience I gained there would translate well to the BVA Board.

What do you bring to the Board?
In industry I gained experience in marketing, finance, strategy, public relations, project management and government affairs. While based in Brussels I was a member of the board of the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe for four years, so I had some background in the issues facing a veterinary organisation. Now that I am at the end of my term, I believe the key things I have brought to the Board are a fresh approach, taking an active part in driving strategy forward and always believing that you can make a difference.

Why is the Board important?
The BVA is over 100 years old. Its original brief has changed and so in the modern veterinary world the Board members try to make the organisation fit for the 21st century.

The Board ensures that the BVA is managed effectively. Not only do we have to look at the present, but also towards future opportunities and threats. For example, in a lot of membership organisations the majority of income can come from one source (subscriptions). It is important to look at the development of other income streams so that if one income stream drops dramatically the other income streams will balance it out. In other words we don’t keep all our eggs in one basket.

The Board focuses on the BVA’s core strengths. A few years ago we reviewed our publishing activity and came to the conclusion that this was not a core activity/strength – we are a veterinary association not a publishing house. Therefore, we made the decision to outsource our publications – a decision that did not go down well with all of the membership at the time. However, a few years down the road the feedback I have received from members is that it was the right decision.

On the issue of communication with members and other stakeholders, information technology changes rapidly so we have to use the most appropriate medium for communication that meets the needs of our members.

What advice would you give to someone wanting to join the Board?
If you have experience in business or senior management roles and are interested in the future of the BVA then put your name forward. Never been involved in BVA? Don’t worry. To my mind, no previous involvement in BVA (Council, working groups, etc) is a plus. It allows you to stand back and consider the proposals that you are dealing with from a purely business perspective.

What’s the best piece of advice you were ever given?
Early in my career in industry my boss told me that he was always happy to discuss issues with me. However, I had to come with a proposed solution otherwise the meeting would never take place. Always look for possible solutions before you consult others.

What was your proudest moment?
Picking one is difficult. From a veterinary point of view it has to be getting my FRCVS.

The BVA Board is seeking new members. Information packs and nomination forms are available on the BVA’s website, www.bva.co.uk/about_us/BVA_Board.aspx. The closing date for applications is 17.00 on October 15.
Ten-minute chat

Declan O'Rourke

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