



# Small Animal Graduate Program

Respect | Compassion | Professionalism | Teamwork

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## 1. Overview

Graduate veterinarians are an integral part of Ballarat Veterinary Practice's commitment to developing our future veterinary workforce. We welcome graduates to join our team in providing compassionate professional and high-quality veterinary care, to the Ballarat and surrounding community.

The BVP Small Animal Graduate Program was implemented to complement the routine induction and supervision already available to new staff and is designed to support graduates in making the transition from student, to registered veterinarian, within a supportive and welcoming environment.

The program aims to provide mentoring, as well as to promote educational opportunities to graduates as they consolidate their theoretical and clinical skills. This is a work-based program where clinical support, structured learning, and mentoring is provided by AVA-trained mentors, senior veterinarians, experienced nursing and support-staff as well as the practice Partners.

The programme builds on what we all do in practice every day when we have a new graduate – we build their confidence by starting with simple, straightforward tasks, and move through to more complex tasks as their knowledge and experience grows. The program's success is dependent on the mutual understanding that when graduates begin their veterinary career, they do not yet have the experience to carry out all activities confidently and independently without some level of support. We aim to give our newly graduated veterinarians the confidence to try, knowing that they are scaffolded by a safety-net and system of support should they need it.

Upon successful completion of the one-year program, graduates will be presented with a plaque to recognise their achievement and their progression to Associate Veterinarian.

## 2. The objectives of the program

The experience of graduating, finding a job and starting a career is an exciting time, but it can be daunting too. The BVP Small Animal Graduate Program aims to counter some of the feelings of isolation and inadequacy often experienced in a first professional role.

The aim of the program is to provide a meaningful and effective period of support for newly graduated veterinarians as they begin their careers. It is recognised that a period of support is required to assist them to move beyond day-one competency, to becoming confident, capable and independent veterinary professionals.

Throughout the program we aim to:

- Provide productive **feedback** by engaging in timely discussions which are constructive, motivational and specific to the graduate's development.
- Help the graduate explore and express what they feel they have learned during specific cases, and **coach** them to recognise their strengths and areas for further development, and ensure that they are challenging themselves to progress.
- Give our newly graduated vets the **confidence** to perform new or challenging techniques with the security of having a more experienced vet to help if needed



- Provide **mentoring**, guidance and reassurance to the graduate while managing their expectations and encouraging discussions that aid in professional development. Assist them to develop their self-belief and encouraging them to find their professional identity.
- Work with the graduate to set clear, specific, challenging (but achievable) time bound **goals**, while acting on feedback and reflections.
- Ensure that **support** is given from all areas of the workplace, from the reception team, to nursing staff, and fellow veterinarians - allowing graduates to get involved in cases they need to in order to progress.
- Meet at regular intervals to discuss the graduates' **progress** as a whole across all the activities in their role

The ultimate goal is to integrate the graduate into the workplace and to prepare graduates for a successful long-term career in the veterinary industry.

### 3. The structure of the program

The program involves mentoring, clinical support, and a structured learning program consisting of a series of modules which will be undertaken during your first 12 months.

#### a. Mentoring

Your mentors will meet with you in an informal setting, get to know you, and provide you with useful strategies to support the transition from student to professional.

You'll be guided by experienced veterinary professionals who are AVA-trained mentors and who also have training in mental health first-aid. Our mentors have a particular interest in helping to guide and shape newly graduated vets and will provide you with an invaluable level of support and help you to reflect, learn and grow within your first 12 months as a registered veterinarian.

Mentoring provides a forum in which many of the complex issues graduates face can be discussed and explored in ways that help them continually come to terms with the requirements of working in the veterinary industry. Through mentoring and support, we aim to build the capacity for reflection into a new graduates' repertoire of competencies, early on in their professional life. A graduate's first year is filled with constant activity and so it can be difficult to find time to pause and consider, or reflect upon, events and what one might learn from situations. The opportunity to work in a safe environment with peers experiencing similar situations, feelings and challenges is one of the most positive potential benefits of a graduate program. Enhancing the ability to reflect develops critical thinking skills, builds resilience and confidence, and aids with development and growth and facilitates self-management of future directions and career path.

As well as to guide your clinical competency, their aim is to help you to build core life skills such as flexibility, balancing work and life, being proactive, seeing mistakes as an opportunity for learning and being positive in the workplace.



## b. Clinical support

As newly graduated veterinarians, our team of highly skilled nurses and support staff know that you will need a bit of time to settle, and find your feet.

To aid in this transition, there are also systems and processes in place – such as appointment buffers and being teamed up with senior nurses – to help you as much as possible in your early weeks and months.

At BVP we are lucky to have a large team of highly experienced vets who are available to assist you with not only your questions about tricky cases, but to help you with the development of teamwork skills and relationships, and the need to establish an individual professional identity.



## c. Structured learning

During your first 12 months with BVP, you will complete a structured program aimed at guiding veterinarians through their first year of clinical practice. The program is designed to provide you with coaching and insights into your new profession and to assist you to meet challenges head-on and thrive as a veterinarian.

The structured modules include:



### ➤ Introduction to the program

In the first session, you will learn a little about your peers and your mentors and discuss the aims and expectations of the program itself. You will also look at the concept of 'Competence vs Confidence' and talk about overcoming challenges and celebrating wins.

### ➤ Time Management

During session two you will look at time management, and how to make the schedule work for you. You'll look at veterinary specific tips for managing your time better and investigate how your natural style and way of working might impact your ability to stay on track.

You'll also discuss with your mentors some tips and tricks for preparing for your upcoming three-month review. How to get the most from the review, and what your expectations should be.

### ➤ Constructing an Effective Consultation

As a veterinarian you already know how to perform a full clinical examination, but you can help your clients see the value by explaining what you are doing and why. This module will explain the importance of communication in the examination process, as well as practical tips to ensure your client feels satisfied with the consultation. Also covered in this module is how to effectively make clear recommendations to your client. Appropriate use of specific language to make your recommendation can result in a pet owner agreeing to proceed with your treatment plan and ensuring your patient receives the care it needs.

➤ **Gaining Client Commitment**

One of the most effective things the veterinary team can do to increase compliance is to empower the client in the decision-making process. In this module you will examine how by involving the client in decisions, you are empowering them to take control of their pet's treatment.

➤ **Perfectionism & Impostor Syndrome**

In this module, you will discuss the concept of Impostor Syndrome (IS) and traits of perfectionism. You will examine the pitfalls of perfectionism common symptoms of IS and look at ways of combatting it.

➤ **Resilience & Making mistakes**

Understanding that mistakes can often make us better if we own them, learn from them, and don't repeat the same ones, can be key in your first year of practice. At University, you are taught the lessons and theories and then you're tested on those learnings. In practice, the opposite is true; you are often required to test a theory, and then learn from it. In this module you'll also look at ways of building resilience, coping with negative events, and bouncing back after challenges and setbacks.

➤ **End-of-Life Communication and Self-care**

As a professional, helping your client manage the euthanasia and grieving process is always going to be part of your role. Knowing how to appropriately communicate with clients during the euthanasia process can be difficult, but this module will equip you with the skills needed to navigate these conversations, while protecting yourself from compassion fatigue.

➤ **Maximising your success!**

At this stage the focus will be on setting you up for success as you move out of the Small Animal Graduate Program. You will be encouraged to think about what motivates you, think about setting some goals, look at ideas for continuing professional development, and coaching yourself for success.



## 4. A timeline of your first year

<b>Month one</b>	<p>Your days will be structured in such a way that you will have a half a day in the surgery, and a half a day of consulting.</p> <p>In line with the schedule for all our veterinarians, your consultations will be 20 minutes, but will be simpler in nature.</p> <p>During your first month, you will not be on the Saturday roster, but at the end of your first month it is expected that you will be added to the Saturday roster.</p>
<b>Three-month review</b>	<p>At the end of your first three months, you will be scheduled for a review with your manager. At this review, you will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• talk about some achievements/wins</li><li>• talk about any struggles you may be having</li><li>• provide feedback to your manager</li><li>• bring along five histories for discussion (only one can be a vaccination). Your manager will also bring five of your histories for discussion. You will look at the:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ case history</li><li>○ examination outcomes</li><li>○ differentials</li><li>○ treatment plans</li></ul></li><li>• review the competency framework (see Appendix 1)</li><li>• discuss some financials and metrics</li></ul> <p>At the end of your first three months, it is envisaged that you will have attained the proficiency to move on to the evening roster.</p> <p>At this meeting you will likely discuss a pay review which will be dependent upon performance. There will be some key markers around confidence and competence, as well as engagement and accountabilities which will feed into this assessment of performance.</p>
<b>Six-month review</b>	<p>At the end of your first six months, you will move from Level 1A to Level 1B, and this will be formalised in a letter.</p> <p>You will be scheduled for a six-month review with your manager and at this review, you will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• set some goals for the next six months</li><li>• track your progress against the competency framework</li><li>• bring along five histories for discussion (only one can be a vaccination). Your manager will also bring five of your histories for discussion. You will look at the:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ case history</li><li>○ examination outcomes</li><li>○ differentials</li><li>○ treatment plans</li></ul></li><li>• discuss some financials and metrics</li></ul> <p>At this review meeting you will likely discuss a pay review which, again, will be dependent upon performance.</p>

## 12-month review

Congratulations, at your 12-month mark you will officially move out of Small Animal Graduate Program and on to being fully-fledged Associate Veterinarian.

You'll be awarded a plaque to recognise your achievement and will discuss a 12-month review of your wage.

At your 12-month review meeting, you will:

- again, bring along five histories for discussion (only one can be a vaccination). Your manager will also bring five of your histories for discussion. You will look at the:
  - case history
  - examination outcomes
  - differentials
  - treatment plans
- discuss some financials and metrics
- look back over the last 12 months – celebrate the wins
- evaluate the Small Animal Graduate Program
- talk about the future goals that you have discussed with your mentors
- discuss CPD and career planning

## 5. Beyond your first year

Upon successful completion of the graduate program at the end of your first year, you'll be awarded a plaque to recognise your achievement, and to mark your progression from newly graduated vet to fully fledged associate.

In addition, you'll be asked to evaluate the program and to meet with the Small Animal Partners to reflect upon your first year and set some goals for the future. Engagement in a discussion around career planning and progression within the business will also take place, as will a conversation around salary.

You'll be encouraged to think about your areas of special interest, the options available to you, and to consider a roadmap for career progression.

## 6. Continuing professional development

You will be provided with an extra five days of paid leave to be used for the purpose of continuing professional development (CPD) and \$2,000 towards the cost of learning and development.

## 7. Surgical Competencies

It is important that you are proactive with your learning and development and seek out surgical opportunities whenever possible.

The list in Table 1 below suggests the minimum expectation for your surgical exposure and experience within your first year.

This list is not exhaustive, and is deliberately 'high level' so that the competencies can be relevant to a variety of cases and or/scenarios which will occur in the clinics. It is expected that you will identify your own learning needs through self-assessment and, in consultation with your supervisor, develop and implement plans to address these needs.

### Elements of competency – Table 1

This table is also found on the BVP & Eureka New Graduate Program SharePoint site under the 'Competency Checklist' link. You can download and save the checklist in your own files, and tick off each procedure (or better still, keep a tally) as you perform it.

Castrate dog (primary surgeon)	Ideally within first month
Castrate cat (primary surgeon)	
Diagnostic radiographs	
Fine needle aspiration	
Spey cat (primary surgeon)	Ideally prior to month three
Small dog spey (primary surgeon)	
Basic lump removal	
Dental scale and polish	
Large dog spey (primary surgeon)	Ideally prior to month six
Caesarean surgery (with guidance)	
Enterotomy	
Complex dental (with guidance)	
Cystotomy	Ideally prior to the end of your first year
Artificial insemination	



## Appendix 1: Competency framework

At the end of the program, it is expected that you will have achieved competency and be able to:

<b>Medical and surgical care</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Perform safe and effective animal restraint and handling</li><li>• Perform comprehensive and focused physical examination of animals presented and be able to distinguish between the normal and the abnormal</li><li>• Perform core diagnostic procedures (haematology, clinical pathology, radiology, imaging)</li><li>• From the history, clinical examination and interpretation of diagnostic procedures arrive at a tenable diagnosis or diagnostic hypothesis and a list of differential diagnoses</li><li>• Develop strategies that are appropriate to the circumstances for dealing effectively with commonly diagnosed conditions and diseases</li><li>• Perform emergency procedures ensuring the relief of pain and suffering and taking into account ethical and legal considerations</li><li>• Identify appropriate surgical and physical procedures as diagnostic and/or therapeutic options, with due regard given to the urgency of the procedure.</li><li>• Discuss with the client the risks, prognosis and cost/benefit of procedures, as appropriate.</li><li>• Carry out preoperative planning effectively.</li><li>• Prepare the facilities, the animal and the support staff consistent with the needs of the procedure and prevailing standards.</li><li>• Use techniques, materials and equipment which are appropriate, and consistent with prevailing standards.</li><li>• Anticipate complications and take steps to prevent their occurrence.</li><li>• Perform safe anaesthesia induction, maintenance and monitoring to ensure safe and humane recovery</li><li>• Monitor the patient, personnel and procedures effectively.</li><li>• Modify the techniques according to changing needs.</li><li>• Provide supportive care and/or therapy which is consistent with the needs of the animal.</li><li>• Ensure that postoperative care and assessment is complete.</li><li>• Perform surgical procedures using appropriate techniques and procedures before, during and after surgery that will minimise the risk to the animal and maximise the likelihood of a successful outcome.</li><li>• Perform dental procedures using appropriate techniques and procedures before, during and after surgery that will minimise the risk to the animal and maximise the likelihood of a successful outcome</li><li>• Perform therapeutic medical procedures. Record, monitor and follow up therapeutic responses and modifies where appropriate</li><li>• Evaluate the need for, and perform euthanasia safely and humanely using procedures appropriate for the species concerned and the circumstances. In addition, recognise the sensitivity of the situation and the need for support of grieving</li></ul>
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	<p>clients and the requirement for the consent of the owner of the animal (where known)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor patient, manage patient comfort, and provide ongoing nursing care</li> <li>• Recognise and manage pain appropriately</li> <li>• Recognise personal limitations in dealing with unfamiliar, complicated or technically difficult cases and be prepared to seek further advice, assistance or to refer such cases to others</li> </ul>
<b>Disease prevention and control</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the principles and practices involved in controlling the spread of diseases, recognises zoonotic disease potential, and implements control measures</li> <li>• Promote the health of animals, people, and the environment</li> </ul>
<b>Health promotion and animal welfare</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt an ethical approach to meeting professional obligations and adhere to ethical standards when advocating for animals</li> <li>• Provide comprehensive wellness and preventive care</li> <li>• Implement evidence-based vaccine protocols</li> <li>• Formulate a nutrition plan appropriate to life stage and health status</li> <li>• Recommend and perform preventive dentistry</li> <li>• Screen for and manage infectious diseases and parasites</li> <li>• Counsel client about husbandry and welfare needs</li> </ul>
<b>Client interaction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate effectively to establish and nurture relationships</li> <li>• Communicate with transparency, empathy, respect, and compassion to build rapport</li> <li>• Communicate information in a manner appropriate to the recipient's knowledge, experience, and preference</li> <li>• Effectively manages disagreements and emotionally-charged conversations</li> <li>• Elicit and share information to efficiently manage the flow of a professional encounter</li> </ul>
<b>Professionalism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exhibit the company's core values of teamwork, professionalism, compassion and respect at all times</li> <li>• Practice time management</li> <li>• Exhibit self-confidence and professional behaviour when interacting with others</li> <li>• Attend to the wellbeing of self and others</li> <li>• Uphold the professional standards expected of a Veterinarian registered in the state of Victoria</li> <li>• Create and/or contribute to operations that strengthen the organisation</li> <li>• Embrace and adapt to changes in emerging technologies and service models</li> <li>• Analyse financial implications when making operational decisions</li> <li>• Pursue ongoing improvement of professional activities through reflection and self-directed learning</li> </ul>
<b>Statutory compliance, legislation and ethics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver veterinary services compliant with legal and regulatory requirements</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recognise and adhere to all safety protocol as outlined in the BVP/Eureka Occupational Health and Safety Manual</li></ul>
<b>Communication and administration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstrate skills and behaviours to foster effective teamwork and promote collaboration by empowering all team members</li><li>• Record accurate and appropriate clinical records in a timely and efficient manner.</li><li>• Implement an efficient and effective way of managing administrative tasks including email communication, staying abreast of clinic and company-wide announcements and returning client phone calls.</li></ul>