

Nottingham veterinary students get financial help from Hill's

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Aspiring vets studying at The University of Nottingham will be helped to fulfil their ambitions thanks to a £30,000 donation from Hill's Pet Nutrition.

Undergraduates at the School of Veterinary Medicine and Science – the UK's newest vet school – will be able to get financial help over the next three years from a fund set up by Hill's. The donation will be doubled over that period through the UK Higher Education Match Funding Scheme, making a further £30,000 available.

Veterinary students are particularly vulnerable to financial difficulties because of the length and intensity of their courses – they have more years of study to fund but less time for part-time and vacation work.

They undertake a demanding and intensive course, which comprises more than 32 hours contact time per week, over a five-year course which is up to 34 weeks long per year. During vacations, students are required to undertake Extra Mural Studies (EMS), an essential element of undergraduate veterinary education.

Students must complete a minimum of 38 weeks of EMS during their course, which should normally consist of 12 weeks animal husbandry and 26 weeks of clinical placements – this amounts to the equivalent of three additional terms. During EMS, students are required to fund their own accommodation, travel and subsistence, as it is not taken into account by the Student Loans Company.

Hill's and the School of Veterinary Medicine and Science are very concerned about the increasing financial burden incurred by today's veterinary undergraduate students.

More than two-thirds of students feel unable to work to supplement their income, according to a survey. The 2008 British Veterinary Association/ Association of Veterinary Students survey of veterinary students concluded that one in three students find themselves in a difficult or severe financial situation, and anticipated that debt on graduation for veterinary students will reach £29,400.

Professor Gary England, Dean of the School of Veterinary Medicine and Science, said: "We are extremely grateful for Hill's visionary funding, as it will provide much-needed support to our students.

"In particular, the Nottingham course has very able and talented students from a wide variety of backgrounds, including over 35 per cent from non-traditional widening participation backgrounds and a further 10 per cent graduates who cannot receive a student loan – so it's vitally important that all our students are not disadvantaged financially and can achieve their potential.

"Whilst the majority of funding will be assigned in relation to financial hardship, a smaller amount will also allow outstanding students to partake of exceptional Clinical EMS opportunities, that

otherwise might be denied to them.

“Whilst EMS is a valuable and compulsory element essential to meet Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons requirements, both students and the School would benefit from a wider recognition by governmental funding bodies and the Student Loans Company of the financial implications of providing and undertaking EMS.”

The Hill’s Funding will establish a scheme to provide a bursary for students undertaking Clinical EMS during years 4 and 5 of the course.

Adrian Pratt, Vet Affairs Manager for Hill’s UK, commented: “We’ve known for a while that the debt burden on vet students is growing, so when the Vet School approached us with the idea we leapt at the chance to help out. We have a long history of supporting veterinary education and we are proud to be able to help the next generation of vets achieve their ambitions.”

The School of Veterinary Medicine and Science at The University of Nottingham is the first brand new, purpose-built veterinary school in the UK for over 50 years. It is the School’s intent to make significant leading contributions to both veterinary research and teaching within the context of valid relevance and application to the wider veterinary profession.

At a time when the veterinary world is facing many new challenges, it is the School’s aim to equip our undergraduate students with the diagnostic, medical, surgical and other skills required to succeed in a changing world. The curriculum combines a clinically-focused basic science programme, relevant clinical learning opportunities with integrated research. The School believes that the development of our innovative curriculum meets the industry need for veterinary graduates with practical and problem-solving abilities, an understanding of the need for lifelong learning and confidence and competence in their skills at graduation. The undergraduate veterinary course brings students into contact with animals and clinical case scenarios from the very beginning of the course.

The School offers two exciting and innovative degree courses, which are designed to provide students with the skills and experience they will need to become practising veterinary surgeons. Throughout the courses, students acquire many important transferable skills - such as business knowledge, communication and an understanding of research - to place them in good stead for the future, whatever their professional aspirations.

Research is central to the activities of the School, both in terms of maintaining ourselves at the forefront of national and international efforts in veterinary medicine but also as an integral part of the training and education for undergraduate and postgraduate students. In the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise, the School of Veterinary Medicine and Science joint submission with the School of Biosciences was ranked first in the country for the power of its research with 95% of its activities classified at an international standard.