



# SAM Newsletter

## Spring 2018

### Congratulations to our Grad. Cert. students!!

We are delighted to congratulate our second cohort of students on the successful completion of the UCD Small Animal Medicine Graduate Certificate Programme! They just received their final marks in February and are due to formally graduate in June. Warm congratulations to Alexandra Alves, Aoife Cox, Aisling Fenton, Caroline Flynn, Cora Houlihan, Patrick Judge, Yvonne Kolano, Reanne Kwok, Aoife Lehané, Nicola Lowrey, Tom Mullany, Helen O'Connell, Donal O'Sullivan, Cristian Santos, Adam Sheridan, Alexandra Shirlow, Rosalind Vaughan, Elenor Walsh and Hannah Wood on their achievement.

This certificate was first launched in January 2015 and since then has had 29 students successfully complete the programme. Our programme team comprises, Dr Emma O'Neill (Programme director), Dr Mary Gallagher (Senior Tutor), Karolina Fawcett (Course Tutor and alumna), our new addition, Margaret MacDonagh (Programme Administrator) and a dedicated Educational Technologist. The team pride themselves in their personal approach to the programme, which, although it provides a distance learning approach to small animal medicine, gives students a chance to chat and discuss cases with their peers and to learn from everyone's collective experiences.

### Key features of Grad. Cert. SAM

- Fully on-line, flexible distance learning
- Recognised route to RCVS Advanced practitioner status
- 1 year accelerated programme
- E-lectures from specialists in their fields
- Interactive clinical challenges - SNAPi's (see link below)
- Case-based discussion boards
- Community of practice approach
- Structured assessment and feedback
- 30 ECTS credits equivalent to 60 UK credits
- VCI Registered vets can gain 100 CVE credits

### An innovative approach to teaching:

Distance learning can sometimes leave people feeling isolated and overwhelmed by the volume of material they are faced with. Our graduate programme was designed with this in mind, taking steps to avoid these potential pitfalls. Throughout, the course is highly structured to scaffold the learning process and provide clarity. The two modules are both divided into four units, each of which has a content map to provide an overview of the resources available and the learning plan for the section. Within these units, the course materials are presented in three 2-weekly 'bite-sized' elements, each with a course guide clearly identifying timelines and coursework to be completed. The course work is designed to gradually build on the skills learned, students' progress through the programme growing their skills using group work and discussion boards to promote a community of practice approach and avoid perceptions of isolation. Frequent practice quizzes and interactive clinical challenges (SNAPi's – see link below) allow students to learn actively and gain regular feedback on their progress. Whilst structured, the timelines allow considerable flexibility to allow students to plan their own week around work commitments.

All of the Grad. Cert. SAM team have a genuine interest in Veterinary Education and have been involved in presenting the approaches developed for use in the Grad Cert SAM at a variety of teaching conferences. The programme director, [Dr Emma O'Neill gave an invited lecture](#) about the design of this programme and teaching Evidence Based Veterinary Medicine at the Veterinary Evidence Today: The 2016 EBVM Network Conference in Edinburgh.





**Important dates for Grad. Cert. SAM 2018-19:**

[Applications are now open](#) for 2018-19 programme

**Induction Day** – mid-September 2018

**Semester One** – Sept. 2018 - April 2019

**Semester Two** – April - Sept. 2019 (There are holiday weeks within these periods)

Two-day onsite practical (optional attendance - dates TBC).

**Useful links:**

[Course details Grad. Cert. SAM](#)

[What are SNAPIs?](#)

Abstract download: "[The use of an evidence-based practice approach to promote active student engagement and lifelong learning in an online Graduate Certificate Programme](#)". Mark Carty, Emma J O'Neill, College of Veterinary Medicine, University College Dublin, Ireland, 2015.

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**What do our graduates have to say about Grad. Cert. SAM?**

"I would highly recommend the UCD Graduate Certificate to anyone wishing to update their small animal medicine skillset. We were encouraged to incorporate evidence-based medicine into all aspects of our course work from clinical decision making to appraisal of scientific papers. In this era of information overload, I have found adopting this approach to be really useful and reassuring when applied to the practice setting."

The format of the year-long online course is suited to those working in practice and I found it to be very accessible. Rather than having to attend formal classes at fixed times, I could log in when it was convenient making it easier to fit in with work and family schedules. Interactive discussion between participants was an integral component of the course from which I learned a lot. The teaching and support staff were approachable and extremely patient. Overall, I feel that the Graduate Certificate in Small Animal Medicine is a very worthwhile form of CPD for practitioners."

*Lindy Vaughan, The Veterinary Hospital, Gorey, Co. Wexford. Grad. Cert. SAM 2018*

"Doing the UCD certificate in small animal medicine was a very positive experience for me. The course was well taught with engaging online lectures, interactive study groups and assignments. It was a challenge, but I felt I learned a huge amount and always felt very supported by the excellent teachers and support staff. The work is broken down in to manageable sections, so it never felt overwhelming."

The course was a fantastic refresher for topics which had become a little less familiar after several years in practice. Importantly, the course had a strong focus on evidence-based medicine and equipped me with the necessary skills to research the literature for the most up to date information. I would recommend the course to any vet who is interested in expanding their knowledge, changing their approach to clinical cases or as a basis to pursue further academic study."

*Deirdre Mullooney, Grad. Cert. SAM 2016*

**Evidence-based approach to Veterinary Medicine:**

Evidence-based practice (EBP) is a core theme running through the Grad. Cert. SAM Programme. Widely quoted as "the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of individual patients/clients" (Sackett et al 1996), evidence-based practice aims to promote the provision of the most effective care available, in line with patient /owner wishes, with the overall aim of improving patient outcomes. The aim of this approach is to allow participants on the programme to develop skills in critical appraisal and use this approach to inform their practice and rational clinical decision-making. The EBP approach has become central to medical practice and has gained increasing prominence in veterinary medicine over the last few years. It is discussed in detail on the RCVS Knowledge Website:

<https://knowledge.rcvs.org.uk/evidence-based-veterinary-medicine/what-is-ebvm/>.