

RCVS Veterinary Nurse Visitation and Accreditation Appeals Procedure

Scope of Appeals

1. This appeals procedure applies where an institution questions the formal outcomes of the accreditation process, where it can:
 - demonstrate that the outcome is not based on sound evidence, **and/or**
 - that published standards have not been correctly applied **and/or**
 - that published processes have not been consistently implemented.
2. No appeal will be entertained in respect of the individual judgement(s) made by the visiting team and contained within the visitation report.

Definition of terms

3. “formal outcome of the accreditation process” means the category of accreditation into which the institution has been placed **and/or** the period of accreditation that has been granted.

“published standards” means the standards contained within the version of the “RCVS Standards Framework for Veterinary Nurse Education and Training” that applies to the visit in question.

“published processes” means the processes contained within the version of the “RCVS Policies and Procedures for licence to practise veterinary nursing qualifications” that applies to the visit in question.

Lodging of an appeal

4. An institution must inform the Registrar of its intention to appeal not later than two weeks from receipt by email of the letter confirming the formal outcome of the accreditation process. The appeal must then be made in writing by the Dean, Head of School or CEO no later than six weeks from receipt by e-mail of the letter confirming the formal outcome of the accreditation process.

Initial consideration of appeals

5. The first stage of the appeal process will involve reconsideration of the report and decision, together with the argued basis for the appeal, by VNEC at their next scheduled meeting. The visitors of the relevant visitation team may be asked to participate in the reconsideration process. The appeal may be accepted or dismissed. If accepted, VN Education Committee will re-consider its original decision and may decide to amend it. It should be noted that acceptance of the appeal may not necessarily result in a change to the original decision.
6. An appeal will only be dismissed on one or more of the following grounds:
 - It relates to the individual judgements made by the visiting team
 - It gives insufficient information to enable any judgement to be made

- It is frivolous, vexatious or relates to a minor irregularity in the conduct of the accreditation process
 - It is unnecessary because deficiencies in the accreditation process have already been acknowledged and appropriate action taken
7. If an appeal is dismissed for want of sufficient information to enable any judgment to be made, the institution may renew the appeal by sending to the Registrar further information as directed by VN Education Committee. The renewed appeal will then be treated as a new appeal, even if the time period for lodging an appeal has passed; but if the new appeal is again dismissed for want of sufficient information, the dismissal will be final.
 8. If the appeal is dismissed on any of the grounds mentioned, the institution may nevertheless elect to have the appeal considered by the Visitation Appeals Panel. The institution must pay a fee of £1500 to cover the expenses of the panel, but this will be refunded if the appeal is upheld.

Visitation Appeals Panel

9. The appointment of the panel is coordinated by the Registrar. One member should be appointed from the VN Council officer team (e.g. current Chair or Vice-Chair), one member from VN Council and one member should be nominated from the list of RCVS panel members. The meeting will normally be held within two months of receipt of the request by the appellant institution for consideration of the appeal by an appeals panel.
10. At least one panel member must have expertise relating to the sector under dispute. The panel will select its own Chair. All three members must sign a declaration confirming that they have no conflict of interest with the appellant institution and a statement to indicate that they will strictly adhere to the published Standards as well as the *“Policy on managing potential conflicts of interest for visitation team members”*.
11. The appellant institution will be provided with copies of any information, apart from legal advice, which is made available to the appeals panel and will be given a reasonable opportunity to comment and make any further representations before the panel considers the appeal.
12. The appellant institution has the right to nominate an observer to attend the meeting of the panel. An observer may respond to questions from the panel; however they will not have voting rights when it comes to decision making. Members of the visitation team may also be requested to attend the meeting as an observer to assist with any points of clarification.
13. The proceedings of an appeals panel will take place in camera and will remain confidential after the conclusion of the appeal.
14. The appeals panel may:
 - a. uphold the appeal and direct VN Education Committee to reconsider its decision
 - b. uphold the appeal, but confirm that the decision should remain unchanged

c. dismiss the appeal

15. Once the panel has reached a decision, by majority vote, its Chair will inform the Registrar of its decision by submitting an adjudicating statement, including its reasoning. The Registrar will arrange for the outcomes of the appeal to be communicated to the appellant institution, VN Education Committee and VN Council.
16. The decision of the panel shall be conclusive for all purposes.
17. Until the end of the appeal process, the visitation report will not be published and the appellant institution holds its current accreditation status.

Independent Review

18. Following the appeal, if the appellant institution raises, in writing, concerns about the process by which it was handled and asks for an independent review, the Registrar will appoint a suitable person from another professional body to review the way in which the appeal was dealt with and provide a written report. The institution must pay a fee of £1000 to cover the expenses of the independent review, but this will be refunded if the appeal is upheld. If the report supports the concerns raised by the appellant institution, the appeal will be reconsidered as if it were a new appeal.