

Refining our awarding organisation audit strategy

VN Education Committee working with AOs to finalise plans



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Refining our awarding organisation audit strategy

VN Education Committee working with AOs to finalise plans

The VN Team and the VN Education Committee are currently working on refining the RCVS Awarding Organisation (AO) audit strategy, which sets out how we quality assure the veterinary qualifications offered by AOs to further education institutions. This includes introducing a more AO focused approach, primarily considering the work of the External Quality Assurers (EQAs) and the AO teams.

A productive meeting was held on 26 June 2023 at the Royal Veterinary College, with representatives from all the AOs providing the RCVS with constructive comments on the proposed audit strategy. Following this, the RCVS qualifications team finalised the strategy which was then communicated to all AOs via email.

The new strategy, as detailed below, will be included in an updated version of the VN Handbook in due course.

The RCVS will continue to have monthly meetings with the AOs to discuss risk ratings and any issues arising so we can collaboratively alleviate any issues. Feedback will continue to be sought in an ongoing manner to ensure the new strategy is fit for purpose, whilst also covering the required elements of routine monitoring for further education qualifications.

Following each audit, the AO risk rating will be reviewed and amended as required. The RCVS AO audit strategy continues to be risk-based, with audits planned in line with the AO risk rating.

A summary of the new further education (FE) audit strategy is below:

New Centre Approval

When an AO approves a brand-new delivery site, or where a site has not delivered veterinary nurse training in the last two years, all the

completed approval documentation and action plans are to be provided to the RCVS. This will then be reviewed by the Qualifications Assessor, to ensure the AO has followed its usual process.

The RCVS must be advised of all new delivery sites at least one month prior to the planned commencement of delivery. This includes where an established training centre decides to start delivering the course at a different site, although these won't be subject to the same level of scrutiny as when a new course is starting at a new educational institution. However, the RCVS reserves the right to request a full review of the approval paperwork with the new AO at its discretion. The RCVS will review and report on the approval ahead of student commencement of training.

“This is a full centre audit but takes a supportive approach and is a good opportunity to ensure the delivery site is managing the new provision well.”

Where issues are identified this will be discussed with the AO, which is expected to address the concerns in a timely manner. Where the issues are not addressed in a timely manner, the RCVS reserves the right to impose sanctions relevant to the specific concerns, which may include not enrolling students.

Progress Reviews

All new and transferring delivery sites will be visited towards the end of the first year of delivery. This is a full centre audit but takes a supportive approach and is a good opportunity to ensure the provision of training is being managed well. Feedback is provided via a letter, but there will be no follow-up actions to be

addressed in most cases, although suggestions will be included where relevant. Where there are significant concerns identified, this will be discussed with the AO.

Review of External Quality Assurer (EQA) Activity

Delivery sites will be visited by the RCVS Qualifications Assessor (QA) at the same time as the AO's External Quality Assurer (EQA). This should ideally be a full audit, which may or may not include training practice (TP) visits, which will be observed by the QA, and then reported back to the AO. The in-person audits will also include a candidate audit trail. Where full audits are not scheduled in the EQA activity plan, another type of audit can be discussed and reviewed. The RCVS will reserve the right to also conduct standalone TP visits, in accordance with our risk strategy; this will focus on a geographical area, as opposed to focusing on one delivery site. Where an AO conducts a thematic review, such as an overarching review of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) for all centres and delivery sites, the report must be provided to the RCVS for review.

- For high-risk AOs, three in-person EQA reviews will be conducted in a six-month period.
- For medium-risk AOs, two in-person EQA reviews will be conducted in a six-month period.
- For low-risk AOs, one in-person EQA review will be conducted in a six-month period.

Remote reviews of EQA activities will also be conducted where appropriate, or if it is not feasible for the QA to attend in person. This will require submission of completed reports and action plans. Online meetings will be conducted between the RCVS QA and the EQA.

Assessment Audits

Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) – For new AOs or where there have been major changes to the OSCE, the mock

OSCE will be reviewed in the year before the final OSCE is planned. The final OSCE will be reviewed once in a five-year period, or as required depending on the risk rating. This will also include a detailed security review for assessment processes.

Theory Examinations – review of AO devised/centre delivered examinations will be decided on an annual basis, depending on review of the AO self-assessment report (SAR) and other auditing activity that may be planned. It is expected that a full review of the content, conduct and analysis of examinations will be carried out once in a five-year period.

Where an AO utilises online proctoring, this will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Assignments – the RCVS review of assignments will be conducted following the AO's review of the assignments. This will entail an in-person or online visit at the AO headquarters, with meetings to review the content, conduct and analysis of assignment results. It is expected that a full review of the content, conduct and analysis of assignments will be carried out once in a five-year period. Completed student work is not required for this audit; this will be reviewed during the accreditation review process.

Assignments and theory examinations will be reviewed during a one-day long audit, in-person or online if appropriate. This will normally be conducted at the beginning of the academic year. A new AO will have its assignments and examinations reviewed after the first sitting; this will be conducted as an online review with a feedback letter, but there will be no follow-up actions to be addressed in most cases. However, suggestions will be included where relevant; where there are significant concerns identified, this will be discussed with the AO.

Registration Ready – or not?

Conferring of degrees at examination boards enables earlier registration

Veterinary nurses (VNs) who achieve their qualification via the degree pathway have historically been eligible to enter the Register of Veterinary Nurses on the day of their graduation. The reason for this was because traditionally this was the day that the degree was officially awarded or ‘conferred’. Veterinary nurses cannot be admitted to the Register as RVNs until their award has been conferred.

Results are normally released to students in the early summer, while graduation ceremonies can be held at any time of year after this. This has often led to a period during which the VN has technically met all the requirements for registration but cannot legally be registered as an RVN. They are no longer considered a student and cannot work in this capacity either.

To help bridge this gap, the RCVS implemented Temporary Registration. This restricted version of registration essentially enabled the VN to continue to work in the same capacity as they did during their training. They needed to have a supervising MRCVS accept responsibility for them, they could not use the post nominals ‘RVN’, they were unable to begin to log CPD hours and were ineligible for post qualification training/programmes, such as the RCVS Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing (Cert AVN).

On the day of graduation, the temporarily registered nurse would then become a full registered RVN. Depending on the number of graduations held each year by a university, this period of temporary registration could last anywhere from three weeks to eleven months. This was less than ideal for the nurse, their employer, and the wider profession.

During the pandemic, we all needed to find new ways to work. As a regulator, we had to ensure that we moved forward in a way that had as little impact on the professions and the public as possible. In person graduation ceremonies

could not take place and we needed to agree how we would be able to register VNs (and vets). During this exceptional time, universities agreed that the degrees would be conferred on the day of the exam board meeting. This enabled us to continue to register newly qualified VNs without delay and without the need for temporary registration.

As things started to get back to normal and in-person graduations resumed, we decided to see what positive changes we could take forward. In February 2023, Tash Goodwin Roberts, Veterinary Nursing and UK Graduation Lead, met individually with each of the VN degree providers to discuss and formalise arrangements moving forward. These meetings were invaluable and really demonstrated that the students are the priority for us all.

It was agreed that the registration process was far simpler for everyone involved when we did not need to wait for graduation ceremonies to take place. It seemed that for the most part, the original system was in place because of tradition and never having had a reason to reevaluate it before. Based on this, 18 of the 19 VN degree providers (as well as five of eight vet schools) agreed to adopt the ‘registration ready’ approach.

Using this approach, the process for the students is as follows: In April, emails are sent, notifying students that their application form is open. Students log into their personal RCVS account and complete the online form. They can choose to pay the registration fee at this time or wait until they have received their results. Upon receipt of a pass list from their university, they are admitted as RVNs. This can be as quickly as the same day.

Looking at numbers from previous years, there tends to be a spike in registrations in July, often followed by another smaller one in the autumn. This aligns with typical graduation dates, however this year, the summer spike came in

June/early July, and another is not expected. In real terms, this means that we have hundreds more RVNs practising weeks if not months sooner than we have in the past. [Please see the below table for further information.]

“Feedback from universities has been positive across the board and we feel that this has been a real success.”

But what does this mean for graduation day? There was some concern that adopting this new approach might detract from the ceremony; however, we had no intention of stepping back from our existing involvement in this – the RCVS still wants to celebrate the achievement of newly-registered veterinary nurses. A member of Veterinary Nurses Council attends each of the graduation ceremonies to lead the new RVNs in their professional declaration and formally admit them to the College and welcome them to the profession.

Feedback from universities has been positive across the board and we feel that this has been a real success. An unexpected positive has been

that schools now feel that they have greater flexibility when planning graduation ceremonies. As there isn’t such pressure to get the students registered, they can take the time to really ensure that the day is as special as possible.

Tash Goodwin Roberts, Veterinary Nursing and UK Graduation Lead, said “This summer, I was lucky enough to receive an invitation to attend the University of Bristol graduation ceremony. I have spent the last six years getting to know newly-qualified VNs mainly on paper or on the phone, so it was really special to be there with some of them to celebrate their big day. Listening to the speeches and the professional declaration, handing out those all-important certificates and RVN badges and hearing the proud cheers of family and friends really gave me a renewed sense of fulfilment in the work that I do. It was a wonderful day that marked the start of an exciting new chapter in their lives, and I was so honoured to be part of it.”

Moving forward, we will continue to streamline and develop our processes as much as we can. We are always looking for ways to improve the experience of our members and welcome any suggestions or feedback.

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
January	1	1		3	6	3
February	2	3	4	7	5	2
March	0	0	0	0	4	4
April	1	1	0	2	2	4
May	5	1	0	1	3	1
June	31	3	16	54	66	314
July	186	247	184	212	335	100
August	11	0	4	26	38	62
September	48	108	53	21	32	41
October	81	82	42	30	36	
November	29	44	133	107	20	
December	11	13	8	16	21	
Total	406	503	444	479	568	531

Supporting veterinary nurses

The RCVS Academy

Launched in 2022, the RCVS Academy recently celebrated its first birthday and, alongside nurse-specific learning, offers courses in a variety of different areas with something for the entire veterinary team.

As the regulator, we aim to be forward thinking and have a strong, trusting and compassionate relationship with the professions. The Academy is a key part of this compassionate approach – we want to be a regulator that not only regulates and maintains standards but helps professionals to meet those standards. The

Academy offers key resources to help those within the professions to carry out their roles to the best of their ability. This serves not only in the interests of veterinary professionals but is in the best interests of patients and their owners.

Nurse Specific Academy courses

Over the past few months, the RCVS Veterinary Nursing team has been busy developing a selection of courses to help support and guide nurses at different junctions in their career.

These are as follows:

General courses

Working in the UK for Veterinary Nurses Course

Last year we launched an Academy course for veterinary nurses educated outside of the UK to help guide them through the process of registering in the UK.

The *Working in the UK for Veterinary Nurses* course has five modules, each designed to provide information about the application process and working as a veterinary professional in the UK. These are:

1) Introduction

The introduction provides an understanding of the work and role of the RCVS, the professions in the UK and the support which is available to access.

2) Registering in the UK

This module contains various activities to assist with completing the application forms and highlights the likely outcome for different qualifications.

3) Preparing for and sitting examinations

The third module is relevant to applicants who are required to pass the RCVS Pre-registration examination only.

4) Code of Professional Conduct

This module should be completed after

having been informed of a successful application to work as a veterinary nurse in the UK and is mandatory for all applicants.

5) Course conclusion

Finally, the course conclusion provides career support and links to help find employment in the UK, as well as an opportunity to provide feedback on the course.

All modules are useful for veterinary nurses looking to register in the UK, but modules two and three are also helpful for employers who are considering employing veterinary nurses educated outside the UK.

Within the course there are several interactive activities to help nurses fully understand the registration process and prepare accordingly. For example, a helpful video guide shows what happens on examination day and applicants are also given the chance to mark a candidate completing one of the stations against the marking criteria.

Again, the video is also useful for those supporting applicants to complete their examination as it highlights differences between the RCVS examinations and those delivered by awarding organisations and universities in the UK.

Clinical Supervisor Course

This course is designed to help Clinical Supervisors support the training and professional development of student veterinary nurses in the practice setting.

The course is delivered over four key modules, including:

1) Role of the Clinical Supervisor

This module provides an overview of role-specific requirements and how veterinary nurses manage this in practice to increase student confidence and competence. Supervisors will learn how to best coach and empower students as they progress through their course.

2) Professional Behaviours

This module will help clinical supervisors to understand what the behaviours are and what they might look like in real life, for both new

The logo for the RCVS Academy, featuring the letters 'RCVS' in a large, blue, serif font with a gold shield-like shape behind the 'V'. Below 'RCVS' is the word 'Academy' in a smaller, grey, sans-serif font.

To access the Academy, visit academy.rcvs.org.uk

and experienced students. There is also guidance on helping students progress towards the required level of professionalism.

3) Day One Skills

The Day One Skills module provides insight into what the skill detail might look like with examples of the types of evidence students might reference or include. These are divided into Day One Skills: Small Animal or Day One Skills: Equine.

4) Conclusion

In the final module, learners will summarise what they have learnt and record and reflect on their learning through the RCVS 1CPD online learning and development platform.

Newly registered, returning and mentors

The following courses are part of a suite of three, that help to guide veterinary nurses starting out or returning to practice and the mentors who will support them through this process.

RVN Starting Out Course

The 'RVN Starting out' course was launched during Veterinary Nurse Awareness Month in May 2023.

While developed to support newly-registered nurses, it contains relevant content for all veterinary nurses, whether they are new to the profession, or have been working as an RVN for many years.

The course begins by exploring how the profession has evolved, RVNs' professional responsibilities, and what happens should things go wrong. We ask nurses to consider why they should be so proud to be an RVN, and how they can build recognition for the VN role.

Specific guidance on the use of social media is also offered – an important area to be familiar with in a world where everything is online.

The course then progresses to five further modules. These are:

1) Workplace culture

This explores how nurses can maximise opportunities presented through workplace learning as well as civility and its impact on patient outcomes, team wellbeing, and human factors.

2) Confidence and communication

This module explores key areas to help develop confidence within the workplace and communication with others.

3) Team-based working

The team-based working module explores a variety of factors that contribute to working effectively as a team and building professional

Supporting veterinary nurses – the RCVS Academy (continued)

relationships, including communication, team dynamics, the principles of clinical decision-making and patient handover.

4) Wellbeing

This module introduces some of the resources available to help support individual and veterinary team wellbeing. It also explores the importance of work-life balance

for veterinary professionals and ideas about how to achieve it.

5) Professional development

The final module explores the importance of continuing professional development (CPD) and why it is so beneficial in helping to reach career goals.

Nurse Return Course

Many different scenarios exist for veterinary nurses returning to clinical practice after a break. They may have been away from practice for a relatively short period of time, and just need a confidence boost; or may have been away from practice and the Register for many years.

This course will provide support to returning nurses whatever the situation, whilst also offering an accessible, online route for nurses to complete and submit their Period of Supervised Practice (PSP) if applicable.

The Nurse Return course is comprised of six modules:

1) Welcome back

This module offers an overview or a refresh of the professional responsibilities of RVNs

2) Your mentor

PSP nurses are required to have a mentor in place, and this is also strongly encouraged for any RVN returning to practice. This module offers guidance on how to work most effectively with a mentor, and ensure the relationship is mutually beneficial.

3) Your development

This section offers a walk-through of the PSP process, and whilst compulsory for those required to complete the PSP, much of this material will benefit any RVN returning to practice. All PSP documentation is provided in an accessible digital format, making it easy for nurses to complete, edit and submit

4) Your CPD

We look at the veterinary nurse's journey in professional development following return to practice – covering evidence-based veterinary medicine (EBVM), quality improvement (QI) and work-based learning opportunities.

5) Wellbeing

This module mirrors the content on the Starting Out course. Whether new or returning to practice, many of the challenges will be similar, and the module provides information and signposting to further resources.

6) Completion

This section provides a wrap-up for RVNS, and step-by-step guidance on submission of PSP documentation for those nurses completing this process.

returning or newly-registered nurses, or providing mentorship within the nursing team.

We are in the early stages of development of this course and are looking for input from all veterinary nurses – whether they have experience of being mentors, being mentored, or not.

Nurse Mentor Course (Coming soon!)

The final course in the suite of three is the nurse mentor course. Yet to come to fruition, this course will provide learning to support the mentor role and will help to develop our future mentors within practice, whether mentoring

VN qualification accreditation costs to increase from 2024

Fees rise to cover recruitment and retention costs

From the beginning of 2024, the RCVS will be increasing the accreditation costs for licence to practice VN qualifications and the Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing (CertAVN).

As part of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) membership, RCVS accreditation processes must comply with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) which allows us to demonstrate that our accreditation processes meet the European standard and are fit for purpose. This means that the RCVS must use an external expert review panel for conducting its accreditation processes.

“Our accreditation processes are stringent and robust and the time commitment must be remunerated fairly.”

All accredited educational institutions (AEIs) providing a licence to practise veterinary nursing qualification, as well as universities offering a Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing, have to pay a fee as part of their initial accreditation process or as part of their re-accreditation process every five years. This fee is currently set at £4,820 regardless of the number of qualifications offered.

In order to recruit and retain the required expertise, the RCVS must remunerate panel members fairly. Therefore, from 1 January 2024 the licence to practice accreditation fee will increase to £12,500, and the CertAVN accreditation fee will increase to £7,400. Where AEIs submit an accreditation application for more than one programme, an additional £500 will be charged for each subsequent programme.

Julie Dugmore, Director of Veterinary Nursing at the RCVS, said: “While we recognise that this is

a significant increase in cost, we must recognise the significant contribution our expert panel members provide. Our accreditation processes are stringent and robust and the time commitment must be remunerated fairly. Additionally, our accreditation fees remain below that of other professional bodies and regulators.

“Any accreditation submissions received prior to 31 December 2023, will be invoiced at the existing fee. The RCVS will still be heavily subsidising the accreditation processes rather than passing it on in full.”

Further information about the current levels of fees charged by the College can be found on our website.

Further details about the licence to practise accreditation process for veterinary nursing qualifications can be found on the ‘Accrediting veterinary nurse qualifications’ section of our website or by contacting vethnursing@rcvs.org.uk.



RVNs in the RCVS

Get to know our newest RVN recruits

Becoming a Registered Veterinary Nurse (RVN) opens up a multitude of career opportunities, and this is no less apparent at the RCVS. We currently have 21 RVNs employed across the RCVS and RCVS Knowledge, covering all types of roles from managing the Statutory Membership Examination for overseas qualified vets, to Quality Improvement Lead, to Digital Learning Content Writers.

Unsurprisingly, the Veterinary Nursing (VN) Team has the biggest proportion of RVNs. With the majority of the roles in the team requiring RVN registration, RVNs now make up three quarters of the team. Below you can find biographies from three of our new team members to explain a little bit about their background and how they found their way to working for the regulator.

“Being a clinical supervisor has allowed me to further my own career and knowledge as a Registered Veterinary Nurse.”



Abigayle Gomez

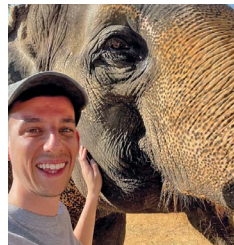
After completing the Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing at Canterbury College, I joined the Register in 2013. Up until now I have been working continually in small

animal practice. I have always had an interest in education, so I took the opportunity to train as a clinical supervisor in 2014 and since then have helped train a number of students who have been successful in joining the Register. Being a clinical supervisor has allowed me to further my own career and knowledge as a Registered Veterinary Nurse.

Finally in 2022, I took on the role of Head Veterinary Nurse. After making the decision

to take a step out of clinical practice, my current role at the RCVS is the Senior Qualifications Officer in the VN Team. Fresh out of practice, this role is a new but welcome challenge. The VN Team are very passionate about the profession, so it is a really rewarding experience to be a part of this department and to contribute to the continual development of the profession and education of future veterinary nurses. While I still have a lot to learn in this role, it has been nothing but enjoyable and has provided me with further opportunities to expand my knowledge and skills.

“The RCVS is a great place to work, full of likeminded individuals who strive to do their best for the profession.”



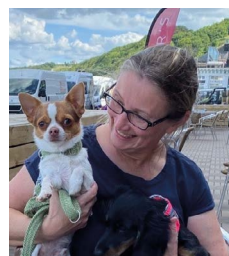
Matt Hall

I joined the RCVS in May 2023 as a Qualifications Assessor within the VN Team. I carried out my veterinary nursing training at Nottingham Trent University, graduating in 2017.

After graduation, I went on to work in a large referral hospital in Cambridgeshire. While working in clinical practice, I had various roles. The most favourable role I undertook was, ‘Student Veterinary Nurse Coordinator’, where I was responsible for overseeing the student nurses within the hospital, ensuring progression through their VN training. I then moved into VN education in 2020 where I oversaw higher education (HE) placement provision at Nottingham Trent University until 2022, when I relocated to Lancashire. I then worked at Myerscough College as a ‘Clinical Tutor for Veterinary Nursing’.

I wanted to work for the RCVS to not only progress in my career but also to make a

difference to VN education. Upon graduating I had no idea that my career would take me down this route, but I am so glad that it has. The RCVS is a great place to work, full of likeminded individuals who strive to do their best for the profession. Since starting at the RCVS, I have enjoyed learning new skills and meeting with staff and students from institutions around the country.



Lisa Hilton

I qualified as an RVN in 2004 working primarily in first opinion practices. I have lectured at further education veterinary nursing colleges, coached student

veterinary nurses in practice and been an Internal Quality Assurer. I have also worked as an OSCE examiner for degree and diploma students. My passion has always been supporting the next generation of veterinary nurses.

“I have lectured at further education veterinary nursing colleges, coached student veterinary nurses in practice and been an Internal Quality Assurer.”

I joined the RCVS in May as an Examinations Assessor working within the VN Team. My current responsibilities include working alongside the Examinations Quality Lead to assist in the delivery of OSCE examinations. I also work with the VN Quality Monitoring team in relation to monitoring assessments in colleges and universities.

I will also be involved in the rollout of the Pre-registration Multiple Choice Examination which is due to launch in 2024.

I have a very spoilt chihuahua, Stan.

Veterinary nurses wanted to assist in creation of new RCVS Academy course

Have your say!

Are you a veterinary nurse? Do you have experience of being a mentor, being mentored, or not?

We are currently working to develop a new course for the RCVS Academy to help support veterinary nursing mentors and develop future mentors within practice – whether it be mentoring returning nurses undertaking the Period of Supervised Practice or newly registered nurses, or providing general mentorship within the nursing team. We are seeking veterinary nurses from all walks of life to share their views with us to aid in the creation of course content.



Our Nurse Mentor course will be the third of a suite of three courses (see page 8) designed to help to guide veterinary nurses starting out or returning to practice and the mentors who will support them through this process.

We want to know from you, our nurses, what you think makes a good mentor and what skills effective mentors need.

To have your say, please complete the short survey at forms.office.com/e/yRBxq2d0pe

We would be grateful if you could distribute this to other veterinary nurses so that we can obtain as broad a view as possible.

Information on the L3 Diploma Registration Process

I've passed my OSCEs! Now what?

STEP 1

The current awarding organisations (AO) that certificate Level 3 diploma students are Central Qualifications, Lantra and VetSkill. On a weekly basis, they send pass lists to the RCVS. Whilst students wait for their name to appear on a pass list, they are encouraged to log in to their

RCVS MyAccount area to ensure that their personal details are up-to-date. Students are also advised to contact their college to check that their qualification certificate has been claimed for. Please allow the AO eight weeks to inform us of their confirmed qualification.

STEP 2

Once a pass list arrives with the student's name on, we turn their RCVS student record and MyAccount area into an applicant record. Later that evening, students receive an email from the RCVS with instructions on how to apply online for registration. Students have three months to apply to register.

If students do not apply or get in touch with us to explain the delay within the required timeframe, their student status will be

suspended and their RCVS record will be made inactive. If this happens, students have no legal dispensation to carry out delegated medical treatments or minor surgical procedures under Schedule 3 and must not carry out work of this nature.

Should a student wish to proceed with their application at a later date, they should get in touch with the Registration Department which will re-open their application.

STEP 3

Students should log in to their RCVS MyAccount area and submit their application. As part of the online application form, students will be asked to make a declaration, upload their Record of Training and pay their registration fee.

The completed Record of Training document must demonstrate a minimum of 1800 training hours in practice. The nominated Training Practice Principal at the student's training practice should verify these hours by signing the relevant pages. Similarly, the Head of Centre at the student's college should verify their educational hours.

Please find the latest downloadable version of the Record of Training document at rcvs.org.uk/document-library/record-of-veterinary-nurse-training/. A newly published, annotated copy can be found at rcvs.org.uk/lifelong-learning/students/veterinary-nursing-students/student-vns-faqs/. Following the

success of the online application form, we are looking to make this document digital in the near future.

Without payment, an application is not considered complete. Payment reminders are sent every two weeks via email. Students should be aware that their **registration fee** will depend on when their application is submitted. This is because the renewal year begins in November.

During the application process, students will also have the opportunity to express interest in the VN days that are run by the RCVS. If interest is expressed, the RCVS Events Team will be in touch at a later date with more information. As part of the RCVS's environmental commitment, all new registrants receive an e-certificate. This has the benefit of immediate proof of registration. However, students are given the option to request a hard copy certificate as part of their application.

STEP 4

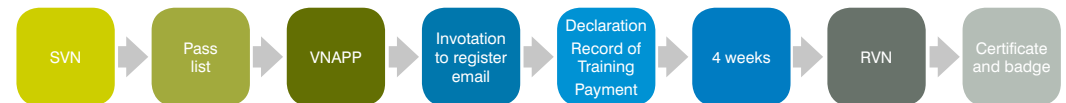
Once payment and a correctly completed application are received, our service standard says that this will be processed within four weeks. Should we find that we are missing

information, we will be in touch with the applicant. If there is a delay, the applicant will be informed via email.

STEP 5

Once we have processed an application, the applicant becomes a Registered Veterinary Nurse. All hard copy certificates, if requested,

and badges are sent within four weeks of their registration date.



Working towards a greener OSCE

Prioritising sustainability

Environmental sustainability in veterinary practice is a hot topic at the moment, with veterinary representative bodies providing advice, guidance and education on how practices can reduce their impact on the environment.

At the RCVS, the Practice Standards Scheme has recently introduced an Environmental Sustainability Module and Award to encourage practices to reduce their environmental impact in clinical and non-clinical areas.

The RCVS is also committed to improving its own environmental footprint, by reviewing facilities, processes, procurement policies and supply chains to ensure they are sustainable. Our efforts for this were rewarded earlier this year when we once again achieved the Investors in the Environment (IIE) Bronze level award.

One of the projects that IIE considered was the review of the Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE). The VN examinations team, who deliver the RCVS Pre-registration OSCE, has been utilising the knowledge gained from veterinary practice along with the work that the RCVS has undertaken to improve the sustainability of the examinations.

During a review we identified what we are already doing to reduce waste and reuse items, and then considered improvements that could be made now. We then considered what we could do in the future.

Involving the examiners was an important aspect of the review. In order to do this, we added a section to the examiners report to encourage them to tell us about any potential changes that could be made to equipment and consumables

Working towards a greener OSCE (continued)

to help us become greener. In the OSCE station set-up instructions, we have now included a section entitled 'Reuse, Reduce, Recycle' where we provide details about the sustainability initiatives being used in that particular OSCE station.

This is an ongoing project and we plan to provide a detailed report for IIE to consider during the next inspection.

A breakdown of our review can be found below.

What we were doing already

- Encouraging the use of public transport by choosing an examination centre close to a train station.
- Encouraging examiners and candidates to use refillable water bottles.
- Repurposing disposable surgical gowns – some have been transferred into child size gowns for dressing up or as protective gowns for messy play. Others have been cut up and the fabric used for lining face coverings and other projects.
- Reusing glass vials by replacing the rubber bung and seal – to do this we invested in a manual vial crimper, empty glass vials, rubber bungs and seals.
- Only laminate paperwork when it is likely to be used for years or where we can save paper.

What we do now

- Segregate waste to enable recycling – surgical / clinical PPE (gloves, aprons, masks) are collected and turned in plastic pellets used for items such as the manufacturer of outdoor furniture.
- When purchasing consumables, we aim to purchase eco-friendly products where possible.
- Reduce waste of some single use items such as plastic pipettes by using glass dropper bottles and micropipettes.
- Allow examiners to reuse items elsewhere – syringes have been used for the teaching of veterinary nurse students and bandage materials have been donated to animal charities, for example.
- Some items are collected and used in another station – an example of this is the paper towel from the surgical gown which is used in the accommodation cleaning OSCE station.

For the future

- Reduce the amount of paper used by moving to electronic marking.
- Survey candidates for their ideas on sustainability.
- Develop an OSCE where marks are awarded to candidates for following standard sustainability processes.
- Share our ideas with others.

Pre-accreditation and apprenticeship support updates

Pre-accreditation support

Back in March 2022, accredited educational institutions (AEIs) were informed about the introduction of the pre-accreditation support package which was being introduced and offered to all AEIs.

All new providers are required to undertake the pre-accreditation support, in order to assist their knowledge and understanding of the *RCVS Standards Framework for Veterinary Nurse Education*

and *Training* when developing the provision of veterinary nurse training. Existing providers have the option to undertake the support, and the vast majority have chosen to do so. All AEIs who accepted the offer of the support package have now had their visits completed, with the exception of four which are scheduled for this academic year.

Accreditation events were suspended for a 12-month period to allow the RCVS Veterinary

Pre-accreditation and Apprenticeship support updates (continued)

Nursing Team time to visit the campuses and enable the providers to act on the discussions and feedback. Accreditations have now been resumed, and whilst not all existing provision is receiving full accreditation for a five-year period, compliance with the Standards Framework has clearly improved since the implementation of the support package.

The response to the support package has been overwhelmingly positive, with good feedback provided by AEIs who have already undertaken the in-person visits. The support visits are encouraging the AEIs to review their own

compliance and customise the suggested evidence examples in order to demonstrate their specific approaches. The swift and proactive response instigated by the Veterinary Nursing Department was commended by the European Association for Quality Assurance (ENQA) during its review of the RCVS earlier this year.

“The response to the support package has been overwhelmingly positive, with good feedback provided by AEIs.”

Apprenticeship support

In order to be eligible to apply to register as a veterinary nurse with the RCVS, students must complete an accredited qualification. Apprenticeships are a popular option, with the further education (FE) route comprising approximately two thirds of student enrolments every year. However, there is often confusion between the qualification requirements and the apprenticeship requirements.

Whichever aspect is being considered, all students must pass the summative practical assessment at the end of their course, which is an Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) or similarly robust, valid and evidence-based practical assessment. Courses which are not apprenticeships often have this assessment very soon after all teaching has been delivered and all other assessments, including completion of the RCVS Day One Skills, have been achieved. However, the apprenticeship standard requires all teaching to have been completed before students enter the end-point assessment gateway; students will then sit the professional discussion and then the OSCE. The professional discussion must be passed before a student is eligible to undertake the OSCE, and this could result in an extended period of time passing between the completion of teaching and the attempt at the OSCE. Nonetheless, until a student has achieved the

OSCE, they have not achieved their RCVS accredited qualification, and are therefore still student veterinary nurses and must be supported in accordance with the *RCVS Standards Framework for Veterinary Nurse Education and Training*.

“The professional discussion must be passed before a student is eligible to undertake the OSCE.”

In order to ensure that students who find themselves in this situation are effectively supported for the duration of their qualification, regardless of whether they are undertaking an apprenticeship, the guidance for the RCVS Standards Framework parts 3.6 and 6.3 has been updated to state: *Where students are registered as apprentices, it is expected, in accordance with this requirement, that students are actively supported until they have achieved their qualification.*

Students should be assured that they will have access to ongoing support from their training provider for the duration of their qualification. If the student is completing an apprenticeship, and has passed through the gateway, support must be available to them until they have achieved all of the requirements of their qualifications as per the *RCVS Standards Framework*.

Event – Quality Improvement in a day

Enhancing patient care, team culture and communication

Delivering eight hours of continuing professional development (CPD), this highly interactive event features sessions by expert Clinical Leads, Pam Mosedale, Helen Silver-MacMahon, and Lou Northway.

This event will provide practical 'how-to' steps, allowing you to look at how you can measure and improve outcomes and care, embed new systems to improve patient safety and learn from everything that happens in your practice. Interactive sessions will look at the root causes of problems and demonstrate how to learn from successes, as well as when things go wrong.

This event is open to all members of the veterinary practice team and offers expert guidance on how to implement a QI strategy in practice. It is suitable for practice managers, vets, nurses, client care teams and clinical directors.

It is especially beneficial for anyone taking part in the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme (PSS). The PSS update in 2022 states that all practices, including GP practices, need to show evidence of engaging with clinical audit or Significant Event Audits, both of which will be covered.

Open only to those that attend, we will run a free virtual workshop to follow up with what you have learnt on the day, and how you have implemented QI in your practice. We will troubleshoot with you and guide you to help make your project a success. Details of this workshop will be given to you in person.



To register, visit knowledge.rcvs.org.uk/about-us/news-and-events/events/qi-in-a-day/ or scan the QR code.

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