

Fellowship Terms of Reference

Role of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS)

1. The RCVS has statutory and Royal Charter functions, which are set out fully in the Royal Charter and the Veterinary Surgeons Act (VSA) 1966. <http://www.rcvs.org.uk/about-us/royal-charter-and-legislation>
2. It also has a partner charity, the RCVS Trust (also known as RCVS Knowledge), which carries out activities to support the veterinary professions and manages the College's archive and historic collection.

Role of the Fellowship

3. The objective of the Fellowship is to advance veterinary standards by providing a resource of independent knowledge for the benefit of the veterinary profession. The foundation of the activities of the Fellows will be based on:
 - a. Advancing veterinary standards by undertaking independent scientific research to establish scientific fact;
 - b. Being a source of evidence-based fact and communicating these findings;
 - c. Promoting excellence in the veterinary profession and communicating this to the public; and
 - d. Nurturing the next generation of veterinary professionals.
4. The Fellowship provides quarterly reports to the Advancement of the Professions Committee, which subsequently communicates these reports to the governing body of the RCVS Council, responsible for overseeing the work of the Fellowship.

Constitution of the Fellowship Board

5. The Fellowship is governed by the Fellowship Board, which consists of:
 - a. the Chair
 - b. the immediate Past Chair
 - c. the Vice-Chair from the Fellowship
 - d. a member of the RCVS Officer Team
 - e. the Chair of the Meritorious Contribution to Clinical Practice (MCCP) Panel
 - f. the Chair of the Meritorious Contributions to Knowledge (MCK) Panel
 - g. the Chair of the Meritorious Contributions to the Profession (MCP) Panel
 - h. the Projects and Engagement Officer
 - i. the Chair of the Fellowship Science Advisory Panel
 - j. a lay member of RCVS Council
6. The Board shall set the criteria for Diploma of Fellowship by Meritorious Contributions to the Profession; to Clinical Practice; and to Knowledge. The Board will also approve the process by which applications are received, processed and assessed.
7. The Board will make the final decision on the outcome of all applications for the Diploma of

Fellowship by Meritorious Contributions to the Profession; to Clinical Practice; and to Knowledge.

8. The Credentials Panels are the Groups that review and assess applications for the Fellowship. The Chairs of these Panels make recommendations on the award, or otherwise, of the Fellowship to the Fellowship Board. The process for applying to and joining the Fellowship can be found in the Credentials Panel Guidance Notes.
9. The length of term for each Fellowship Board and Credentials Panel role shall last three years with the ability for re-election into their role for another term, with a maximum term of six years.

Code of Conduct

10. In order for the RCVS to command the confidence of all interested parties, it is necessary for the Fellows and members of the Credentials Panels to observe appropriate standards of conduct. The purpose of this Code is to help to ensure that high standards are met and that those who act in the name of the RCVS and are representative of the veterinary profession are beyond reproach in the way they conduct themselves. Those undertaking Fellowship Application Credentials Panel work will be subject to the specific terms as per *Membership of the RCVS Credentials Panel* document.
11. In performing their duties, Fellows should adhere to the [Seven Principles of Public Life](#) (the Nolan Principles) to uphold and maintain the reputation of both the RCVS and the veterinary profession for which they are ambassadors.
12. All Fellows are required to notify the Chair of any adverse finding against them made in any Disciplinary / Fitness to practise tribunal whether in the UK by the RCVS or by another regulatory body in any other country.
13. A substantive decision for erasure / removal from the RCVS Register or equivalent by another regulatory body in another country, will result in automatic disqualification from the Fellowship. In the event of the RCVS Disciplinary Committee or equivalent regulatory body in another country subsequently restoring registration, the Fellowship Board may consider reinstatement upon application by the Fellow who has been removed (see paragraphs 33-34 below).
14. Any other substantive adverse finding (for example, misconduct / warning / suspension / impairment or imposition of conditions of practice) will be dealt with in accordance with the complaints process set out in paragraphs 25-26 below.

Confidentiality

15. Fellows must not disclose information that has been shared with them but designated by the RCVS, any of its members, or any agent acting on behalf of the RCVS as private or confidential.

Conflicts of interest

16. It is understood that people putting themselves forward for public work may have their own

personal, professional or business interests. In a small profession such as veterinary medicine, the potential for conflicts of interest is exacerbated. It is recognised that Panel and Board members in particular are likely to know some of those who apply for Fellowship status, and careful consideration should be given to any actual or perceived conflicts of interest.

17. Upon appointment, Fellows are required to submit a Declaration of Interest Form noting relationships and/or posts held that could potentially result in a conflict of interest and will be asked to declare any new Declarations of Interest at each meeting.
18. Where a Fellow identifies an actual or perceived conflict of interest in relation to their work for the Fellowship, he or she must immediately disclose that conflict or perceived conflict to his or her colleagues on the Fellowship Board (or if the Fellow is a member of the Fellowship Board, directly to the Chair) and, if appropriate, recuse him/herself from involvement in the subject matter.
19. The general principle to be applied in such a situation is that the declared conflict or potential conflict is discussed, and a decision reached and recorded as to the basis on which the relevant member should continue to participate in the matter.

Communication

20. Fellows have a role in communicating with the public and the professions about the role of the RCVS and its activities but should take care to ensure that what they say is accurate and consistent with established policies and procedures – if in doubt, they should consult the Communications Department. Any communication with the media on behalf of the RCVS must be discussed with the Communications Department in advance.
21. Fellows have a responsibility to distinguish clearly when speaking or writing in any public forum, between the views of the RCVS, the Fellowship and their personal views, or of any other organisation with which may be affiliated.

Complaints

22. Complaints regarding the activities of the Fellowship or a Fellow in respect of their activities as a part of the Fellowship may be brought by anyone, including members of the public, Fellows, MsRCVS, RVNs and employees of the RCVS, and should be raised as soon as practicable, and in any event no later than six calendar months after the date of the alleged misconduct (or the date on which the complainant became aware).
23. Complaints about a Fellow must be raised in writing with the Registrar / Chair of the Fellowship (the Chair). In the event that the complaint relates to the Chair, then it should be raised with a member of the Officer Team (who does not sit on the Fellowship Board) and the Registrar.
24. The Registrar will inform the Fellow of any complaint received and invite a written statement by way of response.
25. The Chair will then consider the complaint and any response submitted. If the Chair decides that local resolution is possible by him / her, for example, where an apology has been offered and accepted, the Chair will notify the Registrar who will notify all parties and no further action will be taken.

26. Where the Chair considers that local resolution is not possible and / or where the conduct is sufficiently serious, the matter should be escalated for further investigation and consideration by the Fellowship Board. The process for any such further investigation shall be determined by the Registrar and notified to the Fellow under investigation. The Fellowship Board will consider matters as soon as reasonably practical, and in any event not usually later than two months from the date of referral to it and will decide on the appropriate sanction. Such sanctions can include:
- Dismissing the case
 - A written reprimand or warning.
 - Temporary suspension
 - Removal (in accordance with paragraph 32 below)

Appeals for Fellowship applications

27. The appeals procedure applies where an applicant questions the outcome following an unsuccessful application to the Fellowship where he/she can demonstrate that the outcome was not based on sound evidence.
28. No appeal will be entertained in respect of individual judgment(s) made by the Credentials Panels.
29. In the event that an applicant disputes the decision of the Fellowship Board in relation to the outcome of their application, he/she should notify the Fellowship Board in writing of the grounds of their dispute and submit any additional material they wish to be considered within 21 days. As necessary, the Fellowship Board will engage qualified experts to offer assessment support for conducting a comprehensive reassessment of the submitted application and rendering a renewed verdict. The panel will have 21 days from receipt to consider the appeal and communicate the outcome to the applicant.
30. Following a second Panel review, if the applicant wishes to dispute the decision of the second Panel, and wishes to lodge an appeal, they should notify the Chair within 21 days of the second Panel notifying the applicant of its decision. The applicant shall notify the Chair in writing of full details of the grounds of the appeal, together with any supporting documentation they wish to be considered. The Chair, with the Fellowship Board, will consider the appeal and within 21 days either:
- a. Confirm the earlier decision of the Second Panel; or
 - b. Issue an amended decision.
31. The decision of the Fellowship Board shall be final as to whether an application is successful or not. Should the Board decide that an application is unsuccessful, individuals are able to re-apply the following year.

Removal of Fellowship status

32. The Fellowship Board may decide that an individual will cease to hold Fellowship status for one of the following reasons:

- a. The individual serves written notice of their resignation to the Fellowship; or
 - b. There is a lapse in payment of registration fees (for the RCVS Register); or
 - c. There is a lapse in payment of Fellowship fees (for the FRCVS category of membership on the RCVS Register) for a period in excess of 12 weeks; or
 - d. The Fellowship is of the view that the individual has acted to the detriment of the Fellowship, or in any way to bring the Fellowship into disrepute.
33. The Fellowship Board may at their discretion reinstate a Fellow who is removed from the Register as follows:
- a. If the individuals' Registration (RCVS) ended less than 12 months ago, the individual can pay their Registration (RCVS) fee and be reinstated at the discretion of the Fellowship Board.
 - b. If the individuals' Registration (RCVS) ended in excess of 12 months ago, the individual may apply in writing to the Chair for reinstatement if they are re-registered with the Register (RCVS) and the request will be considered by the Fellowship Board. The request can be made at any time after the expiry of one year.
 - c. If the individual was removed from the RCVS Register non-voluntarily for a reason other than non-payment of fees or removed / erased from the register of any other overseas regulatory body, they will need to make a new application to the Fellowship Board. The application can be made at any time after the expiry of one year after restoration to the RCVS Register or Register of another regulatory body in another country.
34. An individual may appeal the decision of the Fellowship Board in respect of reinstatement by making an appeal to the Chair in writing with supporting evidence within 21 days of the decision of the Fellowship Board. The decision of the Chair shall be final and there will be no further right of appeal. An individual may ask for review of a decision made by the Fellowship Board in relation to a complaint made under paragraph 33 above. Such a review should be made to the Chair and should be made in writing with supporting evidence and reasons as to why the decision was wrong within 21 days of the decision of the Fellowship Board. The decision of the Chair shall be final and there shall be no further right of review / appeal.
35. Under no circumstances should an individual use the title of Fellow of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (FRCVS) if they have had their Fellowship status removed, or if they are no longer on the RCVS Register (including voluntary removal, removal for non-payment and removal by disciplinary actions). Continued use of the title will constitute a breach of the Veterinary Surgeons Act (VSA) 1966.