

Guidance notes for newly-enrolled student veterinary nurses 2011 (Higher Education)

Information for new veterinary nursing students (undergraduates)

Please keep your enrolment pack in a safe place for future reference

Your pack should contain:

- Your enrolment letter, showing your date of enrolment and number
- A copy of the RCVS Veterinary Nursing Bye-laws
- Notes on Schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966

Enrolment number

This is your unique student registration number. You will need to quote this number in any correspondence with the RCVS.

Date of enrolment

This is the date on which your training commenced. You must complete at least 94 weeks of training overall, which must include your college course and a minimum of 60 weeks of time spent in clinical veterinary practice. Please see the RCVS Veterinary Nursing Bye-laws for details.

Occupational Standards

The Veterinary Nursing Occupational Standards (NOS) set out the standards of competence you must achieve in order to Register as a qualified veterinary nurse.

Your veterinary nursing qualification addresses the NOS and these should be referred to whenever you need clarification about the minimum level of knowledge, understanding or practical skills you must achieve.

You can access the Veterinary Nursing Occupational Standards on Lantra's website (the Sector Skills Council for environmental and land-based industries) at the following link:

<http://www.lantra.co.uk/stakeholders/nos/nos-list/>

Candidate & Qualification Handbooks

The Veterinary Nursing Candidate Handbook provides a framework for your assessment as a student veterinary nurse. The guidance will help you and your Clinical Coach to plan and organise suitable clinical training and experience in practice.

The Candidate Handbook is available for download from the RCVS website. Please visit <http://www.rcvs.org.uk/VeterinaryNurses>, click on VN Awarding Body, then Student Veterinary Nurses. This is where you will find all information and documents that you will need as a student veterinary nurse. Click on 'Work Based Assessment' to access the Candidate Handbook, Qualification Handbook and Occupational Standards.

The Qualification Handbook contains important information about the Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing, including details of examinations and assessments and guidance on the level of knowledge, understanding and skills expected in each of the units. You should use the qualification handbook in conjunction with your chosen veterinary nursing study course to ensure that you have covered all of the necessary subject matter.

The Nursing Progress Log (NPL)

If your University is using the NPL you will receive your log in and password separately from them.

Record of your employment (or placement) and training

The Candidate Handbook contains a form you can download to record your training and employment. You must keep this record up-to-date at all times; it will be required as proof of the period of training completed before you can register as a qualified veterinary nurse.

You should note that only your Practice Principal and Head of Centre may verify and sign this record. The RCVS maintains a record of authorised signatures and these will be checked when you apply to register as a qualified veterinary nurse. It is therefore very important to keep your record of training up to date at all times; signatures may be difficult to obtain retrospectively.

Your Centre (University)

Your college/university has been approved as a centre to deliver courses leading to Higher Education awards. They are responsible for administering the award for which you are registered.

The university has a duty to ensure that all undergraduates are given the opportunity to undertake clinical placement. University/colleges are responsible for ensuring that all undergraduates who require a clinical placement are placed in a suitable veterinary practice. This will usually be within a designated radius from the university. Students who wish to go further afield cannot expect the university to locate a placement. All clinical placements must be approved by the university/college prior to commencement of the placement period.

Only undergraduates in centres which have been fully approved are exempt from the RCVS external examinations.

All students in centres which hold provisional, probationary or terminal approval will be required to sit the RCVS external examinations. Your enrolment letter will clarify the status of your centre at the time of your registration. You may wish to discuss this with your course tutor. Please note that centres are under constant review and their approval status could change during the duration of your course. Your course tutor should keep you informed of any changes.

The modules you undertake to complete your degree will be mapped to the RCVS professional syllabus and Lantra National Occupational standards. It is important to recognise that your college course it is not designed to cover every aspect of every subject and you will therefore need to carry out some independent study in your own time. This may, for example, be preparatory reading for your next college day, guided study set by your college tutor, further reading around subjects already covered, or cases you have recently nursed. The minimum amount of independent study you are expected to undertake is noted at the top of each unit in the syllabus. Your university will guide you on the quantity of time each module should take to study.

Should you wish to withdraw from a degree programme and train via the Diploma route you will need to complete a change of TP/Centre form. You will also need to send a copy of the module transcript from your degree course to the RCVS, along with a covering letter requesting to transfer courses.

Failure to do this may compromise your progress and invalidate some of your training time. There is a change of TP/Centre form in the Candidate Handbook and it is also available on the website under VN Awarding Body > Student Veterinary Nurses.

Textbooks and Journals

You will need to purchase some reference books to support your veterinary nursing studies. Your college will be able to advise you on the most appropriate books to support your course.

It is advisable to purchase a minimum of one general veterinary nursing textbook, a veterinary nursing dictionary and a clinical procedures book to assist with your practical

work. You may wish to delay the purchase of other textbooks until you have had an opportunity to “browse” a selection in your college library, a good bookshop or publisher’s exhibition.

You may also wish to subscribe to a veterinary nursing journal, or read one regularly in your college library, in order to keep up to date with professional and clinical issues.

Examinations

Undergraduates who are required to undertake RCVS external veterinary nursing examinations should refer to their Candidate Handbook.

Undergraduates within fully approved centres should follow the university examination and assessment procedure. All modules referenced to the RCVS syllabus or national occupational standards must be passed in order for you pass the module.

Veterinary nursing multiple-choice theory examinations are held three times per year. Practical 'OSCE' exams are held four times per year. Candidates must apply for written and practical exams separately through their Centre. It is most important to note that the RCVS does not permit any late entries to these examinations.

Current information about the examinations, including dates and entry procedures, can be found at RCVS Online www.rcvs.org.uk.

Change of address or training practice

You **must** inform the RCVS in writing immediately of any change of name, address, email address or change of approved training practice. If your private address has changed please inform us in writing or email vetnursing@rcvs.org.uk.

Failure to notify the RCVS of a change of practice is a serious matter and is likely to result in the loss of some of your training time and may compromise progress with your qualification. A notification form is included in the appendices of your Candidate Handbook.

Please also advise us in writing should you wish to take a break or withdraw from training.

Registration as a veterinary nurse

Once you have obtained your degree and have completed the requisite training time weeks (excluding annual leave or absence you may apply to enter the RCVS Register of Veterinary Nurses. An application form will be sent to you following your graduation.

Working as a student veterinary nurse

Whilst you are a student veterinary nurse, you may undertake the nursing care of animals under the supervision of a Registered or Listed veterinary nurse or a veterinary surgeon. You will also be taught how to administer medical treatments to animals and may also be shown how to carry out some minor surgical procedures. You must only undertake such treatments and procedures whilst you are working in your training practice or on an authorised placement from your university. You must not carry out such work if you are undertaking a second (or holiday) job as a locum.

What you may do

More detailed guidance about the work you may undertake as a student VN is contained in the notes on Schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act enclosed with this pack.

It is most important that you only undertake work that you have been adequately trained to do, and feel confident to perform. If you are asked to do something for which you have not been trained, or do not yet feel confident, you **must** bring this to the attention of your supervising veterinary surgeon or RVN/VN.

Describing yourself

It is suggested that you describe yourself as a student veterinary nurse whilst working within your TP. If you undertake locum work outside your training practice, you should

describe yourself as a veterinary nursing assistant. **Please note that you may not undertake work under the provisions of Schedule 3 whilst working outside your TP.**

Please note that as a student you should **NOT** describe yourself as a veterinary nurse. The title Veterinary Nurse, and the associated post nominal letters, may only be used by those who have completed their training, achieved the RCVS Veterinary Nursing Certificate and had their name entered on the RCVS Register (or List) of Veterinary Nurses.

Joining a professional representative body

Now that you are a student veterinary nurse, you may wish to consider joining a professional association in order to keep in touch with your new profession. The British Veterinary Nursing Association is the UK professional representative association for veterinary nurses. The BVNA publishes a monthly journal, which is free to members, and holds a major veterinary nursing congress, with many activities especially for students, every October. The BVNA has full-time staff who are able to offer advice on many employment and other veterinary nursing issues.

The telephone number of the BVNA is 01279 408 644.

Website www.bvna.org.uk

If you have any queries, please contact the RCVS at the following address:

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We wish you every success in your veterinary nurse training and your chosen career in the veterinary nursing profession.