Harper Adams University

Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing Accreditation Visit

4 – 5 March 2024

Report to the Veterinary Nurses Council of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS)

Accreditation Outcome for Harper Adams University

Harper Adams University submitted an application for accreditation of the following programmes:

Graduate/Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing – Anaesthesia
Graduate/Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing – Analgesia and Pain Management
Graduate/Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing – Surgical Nursing
Graduate/Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing – Oncology
Graduate/Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing – Exotics, Zoo and Wildlife
Graduate/Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing – Rehabilitation
Graduate/Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing – Behaviour

Following the meeting of Veterinary Nurse Education Committee on 16 April 2024, Harper Adams University has been awarded Full accreditation for 5 years status. This decision reflects the compliance of the programme against the RCVS Standards Framework for Veterinary Nurse Education and Training. Harper Adams University is next due for re-accreditation in academic year 2028/29, however, this may change subject to quality monitoring.

Classification of Accreditations

Provisional accreditation is granted for all AEIs with new qualifications that have made substantial progress towards meeting the accreditation standards. Once the first cohort of students completes the qualification, VNEC will be presented with all QM reports undertaken and consider the AEI for full accreditation. Students undertaking provisionally accredited qualifications may be required to pass the RCVS pre-registration examinations. Provisional accreditation will not normally be extended for more than two years, following the first cohort's completion. Provisionally accredited programmes are automatically deemed to be high-risk and will be audited accordingly.

Full accreditation for 5 years is given to qualifications that meet, or exceed, all the accreditation standards. Where a Provisionally Accredited programme has been awarded Full Accreditation, this will be for the remainder of the 5-year cycle. The RCVS will undertake a full programme review before the end of the agreed accreditation period.

Full accreditation for a shorter period is applied where deficiencies are identified in an existing programme; accreditation will be subject to the deficiencies being addressed within a set period. The RCVS will undertake a full programme review before the end of the agreed accreditation period.

Probationary accreditation is applied where a fully accredited programme is deficient in its resources or procedures and has failed to meet the RCVS Standards. Students may be required to pass the RCVS pre-registration examinations, as well as all qualification requirements, in order to be deemed competent in the RCVS Day One Competences and Skills. This will be at the discretion of VNEC and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Terminal accreditation is instigated where a programme is significantly non-compliant with the standards and has been unable to address the concerns within a timely manner. Students completing a programme which is assigned terminal accreditation may be required to pass the RCVS pre-registration examinations, as well as all qualification requirements. VNEC will communicate additional conditions to the AEI as required, depending on the rationale for the decision being taken. The programme will move into an exit strategy and specific details and evidence will be requested by the Veterinary Nursing Department to maintain oversight whilst the final students complete the programme. The provision is quality monitored in accordance with a high-risk provider.

Voluntary Terminal Accreditation is applied where a programme has chosen to cease provision; students may be required to pass the RCVS pre-registration examinations dependent upon the rationale for the programme closure. Students are still required to complete all qualification requirements. The programme will move into an exit strategy and specific details and evidence will be requested by the Veterinary Nursing Department to maintain oversight whilst the final students complete the programme.

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List of Panel Members

Dr Krista Arnold – ACOVENE Representative (Observer)

Ruth Chapman RVN – Employer Representative

Abigayle Gomez RVN – RCVS Senior Qualifications Officer (Observer)

Matt Hall RVN – RCVS Qualifications Assessor (Observer)

Carla Husband RVN – Chair

Clare Oglesby RVN – Student Representative

Louise Sutherland RVN – Educator Representative

Key Staff met

Carly Atkinson RVN – Senior Lecturer, Veterinary Physiotherapy

Steven Barnett – Academic Registrar

Pippa Bond RVN – Undergraduate VN Programme Manager and Lecturer

Helen Cartlidge RVN – Senior Lecturer

Emily Chapman-Waterhouse – Associate Head of Department

Lucy Evans RVN – Senior Lecturer and Course Tutor for Advanced Vet Nursing Courses

Sarah Furniss – Resources and Financial Planning Manager

Elizabeth Gilbert MRCVS – Senior Lecturer

Kat Hart RVN – Lecturer

Susan Howarth RVN – Advanced VN Programme Manager, Course Tutor and Principal Lecturer

Beth Roberts – Senior Lecturer, Veterinary Physiotherapy

Jane Thomas RVN – Head of Department (Animal Health, Behaviour and Welfare) and Senior Lecturer

Charlie Wright RVN – Clinical Educator

Summary of the Visitors' findings

- Harper Adams University (HAU) was visited on 4 and 5 March 2024. The following programmes were under accreditation review to include both graduate and postgraduate levels:

  Graduate/Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing - Anaesthesia

  Graduate/Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing – Analgesia and Pain Management

  Graduate/Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing – Surgical Nursing

  Graduate/Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing - Oncology

  Graduate/Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing – Exotics, Zoo and Wildlife

  Graduate/Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing - Rehabilitation

  Graduate/Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing - Behaviour

- The Visitors received a warm welcome from the staff and are grateful to all those who were responsible for preparing the visit, arranging the schedule, and providing supplementary information when requested. The enthusiasm, commitment, and pride of staff in what they do made it an interesting and enjoyable visit.

The team found the following:

- HAU is to be **commended** for innovative assessment methodologies offering students a choice of assessments that suits their learning styles and needs.
- HAU is to be **commended** for its consideration and inclusivity for prospective students to include international students.
- HAU is to be **commended** for the extensive facilities on offer to students and for its continued investment towards updating resources and equipment to offer a diverse and innovative environment for teaching and learning. Collaboration with Harper Keele Vet school complements this.
- HAU is to be **commended** for its commitment to providing the industry with new and different focuses of study at a graduate (CertAVN) and postgraduate (PGCertAVN) level.
- HAU is to be **commended** for its active development and improvement of in-person teaching with the introduction of a 'skills camp' offered to all students across the programmes.

Areas for further review include:

- Aligning the learning outcomes and graduate attributes to ensure they are assessed across all assessment methodologies.
- Putting in place a rigorous CPD plan to promote currency and relevance across the designations and allow ownership of niche areas of expertise.
- Development of a marketing plan to encourage student engagement and maintain demand across all the programmes.

The findings in this report are based on the RCVS panel's review. The panel are not the decision makers and their commendations, suggestions and actions may be subject to amendment during the committee process.

Awarding University or Organisation and details of the proposed qualification.

Requirements	Details
Name of organisation awarding the Certificate	Harper Adams University
Main address and contact details for the above organisation	Harper Adams University Shropshire TF10 8NB
Name of Principal or Chief Executive Officer	Ken Sloan
Name of Programme Lead	Susan Howarth
Proposed programme(s) title:	**Graduate/Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing** • Anaesthesia • Analgesia and Pain management • Surgery • Oncology • Exotics, Zoo and Wildlife • Rehabilitation • Behaviour
Address and contact details of proposed site/s for delivery of Certificate	Harper Adams University Shropshire TF10 8NB
Pattern of delivery	One year programme delivered online with some in person sessions. Examinations are delivered online and in person.
Intakes and student numbers	Delivered on a carousel process with a minimum of 7 students per programme per year.

Standard 1 – Curricula and assessment

Curricula and assessments are designed, developed, delivered and evaluated to ensure candidates achieve the RCVS Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing.

			Met	Part Met	Not Met
	Standard partially met				
	Accredited Education Institutions must ensure:				
	Requirements				
1.1	Curricula to remain relevant in respect of contemporary veterinary nursing. *Evidence reviewed:* *RCVS Notification of Intent* *Programme Specification for Graduate Certificates* *Programme Specification for PgC/PgD/MSc/MRes* *Module Descriptors* *Schemes of Work* *Assessment Schedules* *Approved HF Framework Guide* *Application for Development of Approval* The proposed curriculum is relevant in respect of contemporary veterinary nursing and encourages a broader area of subject specific development for the advancement of nurses.		✓		
1.2	Curricula and assessment weigh theory and practice learning appropriately to the programme. *Evidence reviewed:* *Programme Specifications* *Module descriptors* *Assessment Schedules* There is a clear differentiation in learning outcomes between the CertAVN and the PGCertAVN, although it may be beneficial to consider the phrasing of some CertAVN learning outcomes to allow stretch and challenge beyond the licence to practise requirements. Graduate attributes for the CertAVN state a learner should be able to develop critical thinking skills; this is not reflected in the learning outcomes. HAU must consider whether students are given the opportunity to develop and demonstrate critical thinking with the current learning outcomes and assessment methods.			✓	

1.3	A range of appropriate assessments are delivered, ensuring the intended learning outcomes are fully and suitably assessed.		✓	
	Evidence reviewed:			
	Assessment strategies/rationale			
	Marking Schemes			
	Example Assessments			
	Examples of student work			
	Module Descriptors			
	Verbal discussion with HAU			
	HAU provided an overview on the completion of the EPortfolio across all programmes. The panel requested clarification on the inclusion of this with the increase in student workload and how this will impact and contribute to the final grade. The panel was satisfied that students would be informed of the importance of completing the EPortfolio and supported in the completion of this additional requirement. An update of the module descriptors and student facing documents is needed to clarify the pass/fail and 0% weighting of the EPortfolio across all programmes.			
	The panel was unclear on the differentiation between marking strategies for the CertAVN and PGCertAVN; a rubric was provided, however, the level of this rubric was not clear to the panel and therefore it was unable to ascertain whether there was a clear differentiation between levels.			
	HAU provides innovative assessments across all its provisions and allows a flexible approach, using principles of universal design, allowing students a choice of assessments and submission dates to suit their own learning style and needs.			
1.4	Curricula are developed and evaluated by suitably experienced and qualified educators and/or practitioners who are accountable for ensuring the curriculum incorporates relevant programme outcomes.	✓		
	Evidence reviewed:			
	CV Records			
	CPD Records			
	Staff curriculum development meeting presentation			
	Staff feedback on subject area development			
	External Examiner report			
	Verbal Discussion with HAU			
	Staff lists and CVs demonstrate the suitability of educators involved in the development of the course. External Examiner (EE) comments were made available for existing provisions but input into the new programme options has not yet been provided.			

		The panel could see clear engagement from all staff in teaching and learning CPD and additional qualifications within education.			
		It is clear to the panel that HAU is in the process of developing additional accreditation with external bodies in alignment with both the Rehabilitation and Behaviour pathways, National Association of Registered Canine Hydrotherapists (NARCH) and Animal Behaviour and Training Council (ABTC) respectively. Curricula have already been mapped to the Animal Behaviour technician role for the ABTC.			
1.5	Curricula are structured and sequenced to enable students to manage their theory and practice learning experience effectively. *Evidence reviewed:* *Course overview* *Programme Specifications* *Schemes of work* *Assessment schedules* *Verbal discussion with HAU* The curricula are structured and sequenced appropriately, allowing students to manage their own theory and learning experience. HAU offers supportive online sessions for each module which are recorded for those students unable to access them live. Feedback from the students is sparse and therefore HAU should consider future engagement in feedback from learners.	✓		
1.6	Moderation processes are in place. *Evidence reviewed:* *Internal moderator allocations* *Academic Quality Assurance manual* *External Examiner report* *Module Moderation paperwork* Moderation processes are clear and visible, and quality is considered throughout.	✓		
1.7	Assessment and moderation is fair, reliable and valid. *Evidence reviewed:* *Assessment Regulations, Procedures and Moderation* *Assessment Scheme and Regulations* *External Examiner report* *External Examiner Review of Moderation* *Marking Schemes*		✓	

	The evidence provided clearly indicated that the HAU approach to assessment and moderation complies with this requirement. However, further clarification is required to ensure clarity for the panel on the differentiation of the marking rubric for both Level 6 and Level 7.				
1.8	Adjustments are provided in accordance with relevant equalities and human rights legislation for all assessments. *Evidence reviewed:* *Learning Teaching and Assessment Policy for Students with disabilities* *Evidence of Learning Teaching and Assessment Policy in use- redacted* *Equality and Diversity Policy* *Student Health and Wellbeing Policy* *Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure* *Respect Policy for students and staff* *Break in Studies Policy* *Fitness to Practise Policy* There are clear processes in place and HAU is to be commended for the consideration of international students. The panel was able to see examples of these procedures being followed.	✓			
1.9	The required facilities and resources are in place for the delivery and assessment of the curricula. *Evidence reviewed:* *Panel participated in a tour of the facilities.* *Campus map – website* *Course Handbook* *Key Information page* *Induction schedule* *Assessment schedule 2023-24* *Equipment inventory* *Library resources – website* *Code of Practice for Anatomy Lab* *Learning hub – on the day* The virtual learning environment (VLE) is well structured, and students can access information relating to their module content. An extensive library can be found onsite and students learning online are able to come onsite and access these facilities; there is a space for private booking if students wish to use this facility. For those students studying exclusively online an extensive online library is available to support students through their learning. The library team offer support and instant messaging to provide support to students where necessary.		✓		

	HAU is to be commended for its extensively equipped practical facilities which will support students in their learning and progression. HAU provided the panel with access to student facing documentation which requires updating ahead of the new programmes being delivered, to include updating the change in programme delivery from two years to one year.			
1.10	Curricula and assessments are reviewed by an External Examiner who has sufficient standing, credibility and a breadth of experience within the discipline. *Evidence reviewed:* *External Examiner CV* *External Examiner CPD records* *Assessment Regulations, Procedure and Moderation* *External Examiner Appointment form* *Confirmation of External Examiner Appointment* *External Examiner reports* The curricula and assessment examples for the four original programmes have been reviewed by an external expert, however the three new programmes have not yet been reviewed. HAU made the panel aware that the current EE would be reviewing the new programmes.	✓		

Conclusion:

HAU is to be commended on its innovative assessment methodologies and flexible approach to assessments. Students are thoroughly considered to ensure learning needs are met across the cohorts. The delivery team are to be commended on the continuous development of new and innovative certificates to develop the veterinary nursing provision further. The dedication from the University is evident and the students have access to modern facilities onsite. HAU is also developing a skills conference to provide a collaborative approach to all students studying on both the Graduate/Postgraduate certificates. This is to enhance inter-professional collaboration and introduce a much improved in person teaching experience.

Adjustments to the learning outcomes, allowing students to meet the graduate attributes whilst also providing that clear differentiation between Level 5 and Level 6 expectations will allow the panel to see clear progression pathways.
HAU is to ensure that documentation is up to date and is a clear reflection of the student offer, to ensure clarity to potential applicants, allowing them to make an informed decision.

Suggestions:

    a.   Consider the phrasing of some CertAVN learning outcomes to allow stretch and challenge beyond the licence to practise requirements.

Actions:

    a.   Demonstrate alignment of learning outcomes, ensuring they are assessed via the assessment methodology which then meets the graduate attributes.

    b.   Provide evidence of the differentiation between levels in the CertAVN and PGCertAVN assessments.

    c.   Ensure documentation, especially student facing, is up to date and reflects proposed delivery. General proof reading of documentation is to be completed.

Standard 2 – Educators and assessors

Theory and practice learning and assessment are facilitated effectively and objectively by appropriately qualified and experienced professionals with necessary expertise for their educational and assessor roles.

Standard partially met			
Accredited Education Institutions must ensure educators and assessors:			
Requirements	**Met**	**Part Met**	**Not Met**
2.1 Are appropriately qualified and experienced and always act as professional role models. *Evidence reviewed:* *Staff CVs* *CPD Records* *Candidate Information Pack Job Description Example* *Probation Review* *Staff Disciplinary Procedure* The teaching team demonstrate experience in their roles, with some teaching staff delivering on the undergraduate and graduate/postgraduate programmes. HAU supports its staff and provides opportunities to engage in CPD. Staff members demonstrated evidence of CPD that is relevant to teaching and learning development, however, there is a lack of evidence across staff CPD records illustrating area specific focus. HAU must have further discussions with the teaching team and put a stringent CPD plan in place to encourage focused CPD relating to the relevant subject areas of which the staff members want to take ownership. This will ensure staff remain current and relevant in their knowledge and allow delivery of content from appropriately qualified staff. HAU must consider the workload of its staff and ensure a streamlined approach to delivery. The CPD record for the External Examiner, supplied in the panel evidence, is non-compliant with regulatory requirements as reflection has not been carried out on the minimum number of hours as required by the RCVS.		✓	
2.2 Receive relevant induction, ongoing support, education and training. *Evidence reviewed:* *Staff Handbook* *Staff Development Policy 2023* *Example of Staff Development Application Form* *New Staff Induction Protocol 2023* *Mentoring Guidance* *PDR Guidance for Managers* *Example of Staff Performance Development*	✓		

	Verbal discussion with HAU The evidence provided shows that personnel receive a robust induction through the HAU Moodle. There is ongoing support provided to new staff members through an established mentoring programme for their first two years of service. Annual performance development reviews are carried out. Education and training are well supported and encouraged with an agreed CPD budget and allotted training time, including a maximum of two weeks, which staff can use undertaking time in practice.			
2.3	Have supported time and resources to enable them to fulfil their roles in addition to other professional responsibilities. *Evidence reviewed:* *Staff Workloads* *Programme Manager Workloads* *Workload tariffs and module teaching teams* *Verbal discussion with HAU* A new workload model has been introduced over the last 12 months across all HAU departments. The evidence provided, and verbal discussion with HAU, indicated that this has resulted in an improvement in time management for the team to fulfil their roles and allow specific allotted time for other activities. Administrative support has been implemented to reduce the workload of the Course Manager. The workloads for 2024/2025 were not available to the panel as they are still under review. It was not possible for the panel to assess how the additional programmes would affect individual staff workloads as the module leads and delivery staff for some of the programmes are yet to be confirmed. The panel were advised that it is unlikely that all the designations, subject to accreditation, will run in the next academic year. An FTE budget for additional staff has been agreed by HAU and recruitment is dependent on the outcome of the panel accreditation.		✓	
2.4	Receive and act upon constructive feedback from students and the people they engage with to enhance the effectiveness of their teaching, supervision and assessment. *Evidence reviewed:* *Observation instruction – Academic Staff Handbook* *Peer observation in pairs scheme 2023* *Example of peer observation* *Verbal discussion with HAU*	✓		

	The *Academic Staff Handbook* dictates that students are required to rate the quality of their learning for each unit. Feedback from students and from peer observation is discussed with staff at their Performance Development Reviews. Where a member of staff has been personally mentioned within the student feedback, HAU confirmed through verbal discussion with the panel, that anonymity is maintained.				
2.5	Appropriately share and use evidence to make decisions on student assessment and progression. *Evidence reviewed:* *Student result profile for Course Assessment Board* *Minutes from Course Assessment Board Sept 23* *RCVS Cert AVN passlist Oct 23* *Student result Transcript* *Certificate Application Form* *Verbal discussion with HAU* The evidence and verbal discussion with the panel demonstrated that HAU has a good plan in place to ensure the progression of its students. Initially any student that may require support is identified by the course tutor through student assessment results and appropriate support is planned with the Course Manager and module lead. Communication is good between the team and on verbal discussion with HAU they detailed the successful involvement of other departments to support the students, particularly those requiring academic support.	✓			

Conclusion:

HAU demonstrated that staff work well together and support each other throughout the veterinary nursing department. Several staff members are involved in teaching across undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate levels to include teaching a variety of subject areas. Some staff demonstrated active involvement in research or personal postgraduate study.

There were some concerns regarding the currency of CPD and relevant upskilling in specific subject areas, for the delivery staff. It is clear there is provision in place for staff to access CPD and support, however a more stringent plan needs to be in place to direct the focus of study for staff. It was apparent from the evidence, and verbal discussion with HAU, that further dialogue is needed across the HAU team to confirm which staff members will be teaching across both the existing and the new programmes.

Suggestions:

a. Consider the allocation of workload to encourage staff ownership of a programme to reduce over working of staff and empower junior members of the team, with support from senior staff.

Actions:

a. Provide the updated staffing allocation for each designation.

b. Ensure all delivery personnel undertake CPD relevant to the specific programmes they deliver on, at an appropriate academic level.

Standard 3 – Sustainability

Provide strong evidence of an adequate and sustainable market for the proposed qualification backed up by sound research based evidence.

		Met	Part Met	Not Met
	Standard met			
	Accredited Education Institutions must:			
Requirements		**Met**	**Part Met**	**Not Met**
3.1	Provide evidence that there is adequate market demand for the proposed qualification(s). *Evidence reviewed:* *Awarded student data* *Current student data* *Evidence of market demand from full-time undergraduate students* *Evidence of market demand for Cert AVN (Exotic, Zoo and Wildlife)* *Evidence of market research new-existing course areas* HAU has undertaken limited research into market demand for the proposed seven certificates. It is clear that there is a demand for certain certificates to include the exotics, rehabilitation, and behaviour, although the panel had concerns regarding the market demand for the existing provisions on offer. Verbal discussion did not provide a clear rationale for the critical number for each course. There was no evidence to demonstrate marketing for the total provision. Verbal discussion with HAU staff highlighted that some marketing activity had been undertaken although this utilised a largely passive approach including HAU alumni and affiliated training practices.		✓	
3.2	Clearly report finances and budget specific to the qualification leading to award of the RCVS Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing. *Evidence reviewed:* *Course costings – Summer 2023 v 1.02* *Annual reports and financial statement 2021-2022* The documentation provided along with discussions with HAU reassured the panel that this standard had been met.	✓		
3.3	Proactively identify and act on areas for improvement, regularly measuring programme performance and outcomes. *Evidence reviewed:* *Annual course monitoring – module reviews 2021-2022* *Annual course monitoring – module reviews 2022-2023*	✓		

Combined annual monitoring and critical appraisal report Dec 23			
Course committee minutes – 15th March 2023			
RCVS self assessment review SAR 2021-2022			
Awarded students			
Current student numbers			
PTES 2023 HAU free text analysis			
PTES 2023 HAU tables			
Discussion with HAU reassured the panel that staff had made every effort to encourage student input through student voice and inclusion in committee meetings. Furthermore, it was apparent that there had been open and positive communication within the team regarding the development of new provisions. The evidence showed that feedback had been acted upon in developing a new conference style event which it is hoped will improve efficiency, allow students to crossover provisions, and encourage participation.			

Conclusion:

The majority of this standard had already been met prior to the accreditation visit. The panel were satisfied that HAU has identified new subject areas for development with respect to staff areas of interest, existing teaching facilities and the proposed budget. There is evidence that student feedback has been acted on by planning improved in-person learning opportunities. The panel required further evidence of market research and marketing for reassurance of an adequate and sustainable market for the proposed provision.

Suggestions:
None

Action:
   a.   Provide a robust rationale for the critical number of students per course.