

THE POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN ADVANCED VETERINARY PRACTICE

RULES FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE MODULAR SYSTEM

Background

This document sets out the detailed rules for the administration of the modular Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice. It supplements the bye-laws agreed by RCVS Council.

It has been written for the guidance of universities and other organisations and individuals who are planning their involvement with the scheme. The rules were first developed by RCVS's Professional Development Sub-Committee and endorsed in February 2006 by RCVS's Specialisation and Further Education Committee. Bye-laws, based on these rules, were agreed by Council on 1 June 2006.

THE AIM AND LEVEL OF THE QUALIFICATION

Aim

1. The aim of the qualification is to provide a modular route to a recognised level of attainment for practising veterinary surgeons, so that they may perform as competent independent practitioners, delivering a consistently high standard of practice to their clients.
2. The framework also aims to provide a structure for continuing professional development and lifelong learning.

Level

3. The qualification is set at the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) "M" level in the national qualifications framework. The following level descriptor is adapted from the QAA definition of qualifications at this level, **and should be used as an indicator of the level required by all modules in the qualification.**

Candidates will need to demonstrate:

- a thorough understanding of the knowledge base and a critical awareness of developments at the forefront of their area of professional practice;
- a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own area of practice;
- originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and clinical enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in their professional area;
- conceptual understanding that enables them to
 - evaluate critically current literature and research in their professional area and
 - evaluate clinical methodologies and techniques, and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate to propose new approaches to professional practice.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- deal with complex issues in an organised and creative manner, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to veterinary colleagues and to non-veterinary audiences, including clients;
- demonstrate self direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks in their professional area of work;
- continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level;

and will have the qualities and transferable skills necessary for professional veterinary work requiring:

- the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility;
- decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations; and
- the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.

THE FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS

4. The framework of postgraduate qualifications at Annex 1 shows where the RCVS Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice sits in relation to other qualifications, and the possible progression and transfer routes that may be open to candidates. The framework has been designed to allow progression via RCVS qualifications, university postgraduate degrees or residency based programmes such as European Diplomas. None of the routes are mutually exclusive and the intention is that credits achieved as part of the RCVS modular certificate could be used towards university postgraduate degrees and vice versa.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE QUALIFICATION

5. The structure of the qualification is set out at Annex 2. It is based on a credit accumulation and transfer system, where 1 credit equates to approximately 10 hours of activity by the candidate, and 60 credits are required for the full qualification.
6. The 'notional' 10 hours per credit includes time spent on courses, private study and research as well as time spent putting together case books, essays and other assessment-related work. This is not a rigid time limit but should be used as guidance when modules are being designed. Some candidates may need to spend more or less time on their modules depending on their experience. Most modules are designed to be worth 10 credits requiring around 100 hours of study time.
7. Modules may be taken on their own, or in combination with others. Candidates are free to take modules in any order, although in some cases guidance is provided on a recommended sequence. Modules are divided into groups of A, B and C modules, with C modules offering a wide choice of subjects/species areas.
8. To achieve the full qualification, candidates must undertake the two 'key skills' modules which are intended to cover topics and objectives common to all areas of veterinary practice. The 'A' key skills module (15 credits) covers general professional skills, and the 'B' key skills module (5 credits) covers clinical topics which RCVS considers are essential, regardless of the subject area in which the individual works. At least one other full 'B' module (usually 10 credits) must also be completed, covering a broad area of practice. Candidates may make up the remainder of their credits either through a combination of broad based 'B' modules, or by a balance of 'C' modules (10 credits each), depending on their interests or what is of most relevance to the area in which they work.
9. Provided the required A and B modules have been completed, candidates may choose any combination of modules they wish, and this will entitle them to apply for the Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice (CertAVP).
10. Alternatively, candidates may follow a prescribed combination of modules to lead to a CertAVP with a designated title, such as Small Animal Practice, Dermatology, Animal Welfare, etc. (CertAVP[SAP]). RCVS will define the combination of modules that are required for particular titles. Alternatively, for some subjects, candidates may propose a combination of modules that they believe would warrant a particular subject/species designation. The range of titles available, will, however, be limited by RCVS.

ACCREDITATION OF UNIVERSITIES

The Assessment of Candidates

11. Apart from some exceptional cases, RCVS will not itself undertake the assessment of individual modules but will instead devolve responsibility for this to accredited universities. The aim is for the RCVS framework of modules to become integrated with other university courses and awards, which will both improve the coherence of CPD provision nationally, and also give candidates a greater range of progression pathways than has previously existed.
12. RCVS has agreed that accreditation should only be open to universities. This recognises their experience in running assessment and quality assurance systems, as well as the fact that they are publicly accountable institutions.
13. Candidates who complete the required number of modules for the CertAVP through accredited universities will be entitled to apply for the full qualification certificate from RCVS. However, for certificates with a designated title (eg. CertAVP[Dermatology]), candidates will also need to undertake a final 'synoptic' assessment in addition to the assessment of individual modules. In most cases, this final assessment will be managed by RCVS.

General Principles

14. Universities will be able to apply for accreditation by RCVS to assess modules forming part of the RCVS framework for the Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice. Accreditation will be given to the assessment arrangements for the module(s), and not for the course delivery.
15. To take part in the RCVS modular framework, universities will need to apply to RCVS for accreditation for the modules they wish to offer. Accreditation will take into account universities' general quality assurance (QA) arrangements for the awards, as well as their proposals for assessing the modules. Where assessment is linked to courses, information will be sought on how the course will be delivered so that information can be provided for potential candidates, but RCVS will not accredit the course delivery *per se*.
16. Universities will be required to submit an application for accreditation form, and an accreditation fee, to RCVS and provide information and assurances about their assessment and QA systems, as well as information on how they plan to assess each module they wish to offer. Once a university has been accredited, it will be able to add further modules to its portfolio through a simplified procedure.
17. A wide range of course delivery methods will be allowed and encouraged, including distance learning and flexible part time provision. Modules may be delivered through a variety of courses, and offered singly or in combination to form

an integrated course. Where modules are integrated, however, the university must be able to issue certificates of credit for single modules if requested by the candidate, and report achievement of single modules to RCVS.

18. Universities may work with other non-university organisations in the delivery of courses and assessment of modules. However, assessment of modules must be within the university's quality assurance system, although examiners may be drawn from all sectors, as applies to existing HE qualifications.
19. Modules may be those developed by the RCVS, or may in some circumstances be developed by the university or other organisations.
20. Modules may form part of other qualifications awarded by the university, for example Masters degrees.
21. Where an accredited university offers courses as well as assessment towards a module or modules, it will also be required to allow access to assessment to external candidates not otherwise enrolled on the university course. This is to enable those who so wish, to undertake private studies to achieve credit points towards the RCVS certificate.
22. Candidates will be free to gain credits from a number of different centres. When the requisite number of modules in the appropriate combination has been achieved, RCVS will, where appropriate, arrange for a final synoptic assessment to be carried out, and will issue successful candidates with the Postgraduate Certificate of Advanced Veterinary Practice. Where a university has been accredited for a full suite of modules leading to a designated certificate, consideration may be given to allowing the university to undertake the final synoptic assessment for its candidates.
23. Continued accreditation for each module will be subject to receipt by RCVS of satisfactory internal quality assurance reports, occurring at least every 5 years, to ensure that modules and systems remain up to date. RCVS will reserve the right to terminate or suspend accreditation in the event of receiving negative quality audit reports, or in the event of negative or 'limited confidence' QAA reports on the university's assessment systems that might affect the modules.
24. Universities will have their own enrolment procedures for candidates, but should note that candidates will also need to enrol with RCVS either for individual modules or the full qualification if they wish to achieve RCVS recognised credits. RCVS will act as a 'clearing house', maintaining records of candidates' credit achievements.

Governance and Quality Assurance Arrangements

25. Accreditation will be offered only to UK universities or other institutions of higher education recognised by the relevant UK government department and falling under the remit of the Quality Assurance Agency. Accreditation will not be restricted to universities with veterinary schools.
26. The university must apply its usual quality assurance arrangements to the modules it assesses, including arrangements for appointing, coordinating, standardising and training assessors/examiners, to ensure fair assessment and maintenance of standards over time.
27. The university and/or any associated partners must have access to expertise in the subject matter of the module(s) concerned.
28. Universities may enter into partnerships/consortia arrangements, with other universities, associations or other private organisations. It is considered that this will be a way for a number of veterinary-related associations to become actively involved in the system. Where such arrangements are proposed, there must be a written statement clearly outlining each organisation's responsibilities in the delivery and assessment of modules, with a single university having final accountability for assessment and quality assurance for the modules offered.
29. The University's policies relating to health and safety, data protection, equal opportunities and disability discrimination must apply equally to any non-university organisations involved in such partnership arrangements.
30. The university will need to keep RCVS informed of any proposed changes to such partnerships or licensing arrangements, and RCVS will retain the right to withdraw accreditation if it considers that such arrangements might jeopardise the integrity or standard of the qualification.

Appeals procedures

31. The university will need to have an appeals procedure available to candidates pursuing modules. (RCVS's appeals procedure will apply for candidates being assessed by RCVS.) The appeals procedure should normally apply to the systems and procedures for assessment, and not to the professional judgement of examiners/assessors.

Open Access to Modules - Credit Accumulation and Transfer

32. Universities taking part in the RCVS modular programme, where modules also form part of other university degrees, will need to be prepared to consider candidates' RCVS credits achieved at other RCVS accredited institutions as credit towards their own awards (eg. Masters degrees) where the subject matter warrants it. RCVS will act as the 'clearing house' to validate credit transfer claims if required.

33. A university may offer a group of modules together as a single programme or course, but must have systems to enable candidates to be issued with certificates of credit for individual modules if requested by the candidate, and must be able to report on candidates' achievement of individual modules to RCVS.
34. Candidates must be able to enrol at the university for single modules and for an "assessment only" route if they wish. Fees levied by the university for assessment will need to be clearly differentiated from fees for the provision of courses/training and should not be so excessive as to discourage candidates from taking the "assessment only" route.

Content and Level of Modules and Assessment

35. In cases where subject matter is not already covered by a module previously defined by RCVS, universities and other institutions may submit their own modules for accreditation as part of the RCVS framework. Where approval for new modules is being sought, RCVS will seek to ensure that this does not lead to unnecessary proliferation or duplication of modules covering essentially the same subject area. Once accredited by RCVS, the module (ie. its syllabus and learning objectives) will become part of the RCVS framework and available for other accredited centres to offer.
36. Universities will normally be expected to follow the RCVS specification for the module, but may expand this by the provision of further curriculum details, more specific learning objectives and guidance to candidates, and may propose alternative assessment methods to those suggested, provided these are still a valid means of assessing the module's objectives.

Administration Requirements

37. The university must ensure that adequate administrative resources are made available to support the assessment of the modules it offers, including facilities for maintaining records of candidates' progress and achievement, and reporting on these on a regular basis to RCVS.
38. Where modules are offered by e-learning/distance learning, there must be reliable and secure backup facilities to protect data.
39. The university must maintain auditable assessment records, and allow RCVS confidential access to these to enable periodic audits of the process to be undertaken if required.

Certification

40. The university must be able to issue module certificates of credit to successful candidates without unnecessary delay (but allowing for any necessary quality control checks).
41. The design of certificates of credit may follow the universities' usual design style for such awards, but will also need to include the following items:
 - the module title as defined or approved by RCVS, any unique reference number as previously agreed with RCVS, the amount of credit represented by the module; date the module was awarded;
 - the candidate's full name (for RCVS Members, this should be as shown in the RCVS Register of Members);
 - an indication that the module forms *part of* the RCVS Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice (and/or other university degree) and is not itself a full qualification;
 - the RCVS logo may be used by accredited universities on certificates of credit for modules.

RCVS ENROLMENT PROCESS FOR CANDIDATES

Initial Registration

42. Candidates who wish to claim RCVS credits and/or the full qualification will be asked to register their intention at the outset with RCVS. This is to enable RCVS to maintain information on the take-up of modules to assist with future planning. Individuals will be free to enrol with universities to take courses and be assessed for modules, but will need to be registered with RCVS in order for them to count as credits towards a full RCVS qualification.
43. Initial registration with RCVS will be available either for individual modules OR for the whole qualification.

Registration for Individual Modules

44. Initial enrolment with RCVS for individual modules will be a relatively simple administrative process, to record the candidate's name, the module(s) they wish to pursue, mode of study (ie. whether on a particular course, or by self-study), and will involve a check on the candidate's eligibility – eg. previous qualifications, completion of PDP for post 2007 applicants.
45. As university programmes may start at any time of the year, RCVS plans to have a flexible registration system that will be available throughout the year and not tied to any fixed deadlines.

46. A candidate's registration with RCVS for any individual module or for the full qualification will be valid for up to 10 years.

Registration for a full qualification

47. Registration with RCVS for the full CertAVP without a particular subject/species designation will involve an administrative check on the candidate's eligibility, as above, plus a check on the combination of modules offered to ensure that it is a valid route towards the Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice. Candidates will be required to specify which modules they intend to follow and the centres where they propose to be assessed. Transfers to other modules and/or other centres at a later date will be allowed, although an administrative charge may need to be levied if transfer entails reconsideration by a subject panel.
48. Where a candidate wishes to work towards a named certificate (eg. CertAVP(Small Animal Practice) their application may need to be considered by a panel of subject experts to consider the proposed plan of study, and whether the proposed combination of modules is a valid route towards the named qualification. The extent to which applications will need to be considered by a subject panel will depend on the subject area concerned.
49. Candidates who have completed other recognised qualifications in subject areas directly relating to one or more RCVS modules may claim "equivalence" for credits at the discretion of RCVS. Candidates claiming equivalence will be required to enrol for a whole certificate and have their claims validated by RCVS.
50. Candidates enrolling for a full qualification will be asked to specify the accredited centre or centres where they plan to take the modules, but will be able to transfer to other centres at any time by notifying RCVS.
51. It is anticipated that initial registration for the full CertAVP qualification will be available throughout the year and will not be limited by any specific deadlines.
52. Registration for the full CertAVP or any subject/species designated version will be valid for up to 10 years. To claim the full qualification, all modules must have been achieved within the previous 10 years.
53. It is expected that registration for a full subject/species designated CertAVP will be available throughout the year, BUT applications that need to be approved by a subject panel may in some cases need to wait up to 3 months to be considered.
54. RCVS aims to offer an electronic registration system for candidates, so that applications can be forwarded electronically to panels for consideration.

Support for enrolled candidates

55. RCVS will hold a database with details of all accredited modules – including detailed subject content and information about assessment methods, together with a list of all the universities accredited to offer each module, and course details provided by the universities. Outline information will be provided on the RCVS website for all potential candidates to help them choose between centres and modules. RCVS is exploring the option of developing a password protected website to be available to enrolled candidates to allow them access to more detailed information on modules/centres. The website could be developed further in the future to provide guidance materials, discussion sites, access to networks of other candidates etc.

Fees

56. As the RCVS postgraduate qualifications system needs to be self-financing, RCVS will need to charge a fee to universities applying for accreditation, and to candidates to cover the costs of running the modular framework. Enrolment fees for candidates will be kept low enough to encourage people to enrol and engage with the system. Candidates will also need to pay fees to the universities for module assessment, as well as for any courses they wish to attend.
57. Candidates enrolling for the whole certificate, but claiming “equivalence” in lieu of taking some individual modules may be required to pay a fee for consideration of their equivalence claim.
58. Candidates will need to pay a fee to RCVS when they claim their full Certificate qualification. The fee for candidates claiming the full Certificate in a designated subject/species will need to cover the costs of running the synoptic assessment.

CERTIFICATION PROCEDURES

Individual Modules

59. Universities will be responsible for issuing module credit certificates to candidates, and will report credits awarded to RCVS on a regular basis. RCVS will maintain a database of credits awarded for each individual enrolled on the scheme.
60. Candidates who have already completed other qualifications that RCVS considers to be equivalent in terms of their level and content to one or more RCVS modules may be granted the appropriate module credit(s) in lieu of undertaking an assessment, but will not be issued with a separate credit certificate for the modules so claimed. Candidates claiming equivalence will be required to enrol with RCVS for a full certificate.

Awarding the full CertAVP

61. To claim the full certificate with a species/subject designation, the candidate will need to apply to RCVS and request a synoptic assessment.
62. A synoptic assessment will normally be required for all certificates with designated subject/species titles, unless otherwise determined by the relevant RCVS committee. Candidates claiming the CertAVP without a designated title will not be required to undertake a further synoptic assessment with RCVS.
63. The final certificate awarded to candidates by RCVS will list the modules achieved.
64. RCVS will aim to offer at least one synoptic assessment series per year, depending on demand. RCVS may need to put candidates on a waiting list for assessment, to ensure that there are sufficient candidates presenting for a subject during any one series. In the event of an assessment series being cancelled due to low candidate numbers, RCVS would aim to assess any waiting candidates at the next series, but not keep any candidate waiting for longer than 1 year.
65. Equally, it may be necessary, depending on candidate numbers, for RCVS to limit the number of candidates being assessed during any one series, or for any particular named certificate, depending on the availability of examiners. Candidates who are not admitted to their chosen assessment series will be added to a waiting list and entered for the next available slot.
66. Candidates will need to submit an entry to RCVS for their synoptic assessment by a fixed deadline; it is expected that entry dates would be around 3 months in advance of the assessment.
67. In cases where a synoptic assessment is not required for award of the full qualification, candidates will still be required to apply to RCVS for their certificate, confirming which modules they have achieved and the centres that awarded them. A CertAVP will be issued after the claim has been verified against RCVS's records.

ELIGIBILITY RULES FOR CANDIDATES

68. To enrol for RCVS module credits, candidates must either be MRCVS, or alternatively must hold a registerable qualification.
69. Candidates who graduate after 2007 will be expected to have completed the RCVS Professional Development Phase (PDP) before they enrol either for single modules or the full certificate. Exceptions will be considered for subject areas where there is no direct equivalent PDP pathway, although all candidates will need to have had the equivalent of at least one year's veterinary experience after graduating before they can enrol on the scheme.

70. Candidates graduating before 2007 must have had the equivalent of at least one year's full time experience working in clinical practice before they are eligible to enrol either for single modules or the full certificate, and must provide documented evidence of their participation in CPD - in accordance with RCVS guidelines - for at least one full year.
71. **To be awarded the full Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice, the candidate will need to**
- hold a registerable veterinary qualification
 - have the equivalent of at least 3 years experience of working in practice since graduation
 - have previously enrolled for the programme with RCVS
 - have achieved a total of 60 credits through RCVS accredited centres, with the approved combination of modules.
72. **To be awarded the Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice in a designated species or subject area, (eg. CertAVP(subject/species)), the candidate will need to** have met the conditions above, plus they will need to have achieved the requisite number of credits in the combinations approved or previously specified for that subject by RCVS, and passed the appropriate RCVS synoptic assessment.
73. Universities are free to accept other candidates onto their courses that do not fulfil the above eligibility rules, but such candidates will not be able to have their achievements recorded as RCVS credits, or be awarded the CertAVP.

Acquiring additional Certificates

74. Candidates who have achieved the CertAVP, and who then want to work towards a designated subject/species title will need to take any additional modules required for the subject/species area, and apply to RCVS for synoptic assessment. Similarly, candidates who have achieved a CertAVP with one designated title, and who wish to take further modules that would entitle them to a second or further designation will need to apply for a further synoptic assessment for the new subject/species area concerned.
75. If successful at the synoptic assessment, candidates will be able to use the appropriate postnominals to indicate their qualification, for example, CertAVP[Derm;SAP;Anaesth).

FURTHER INFORMATION

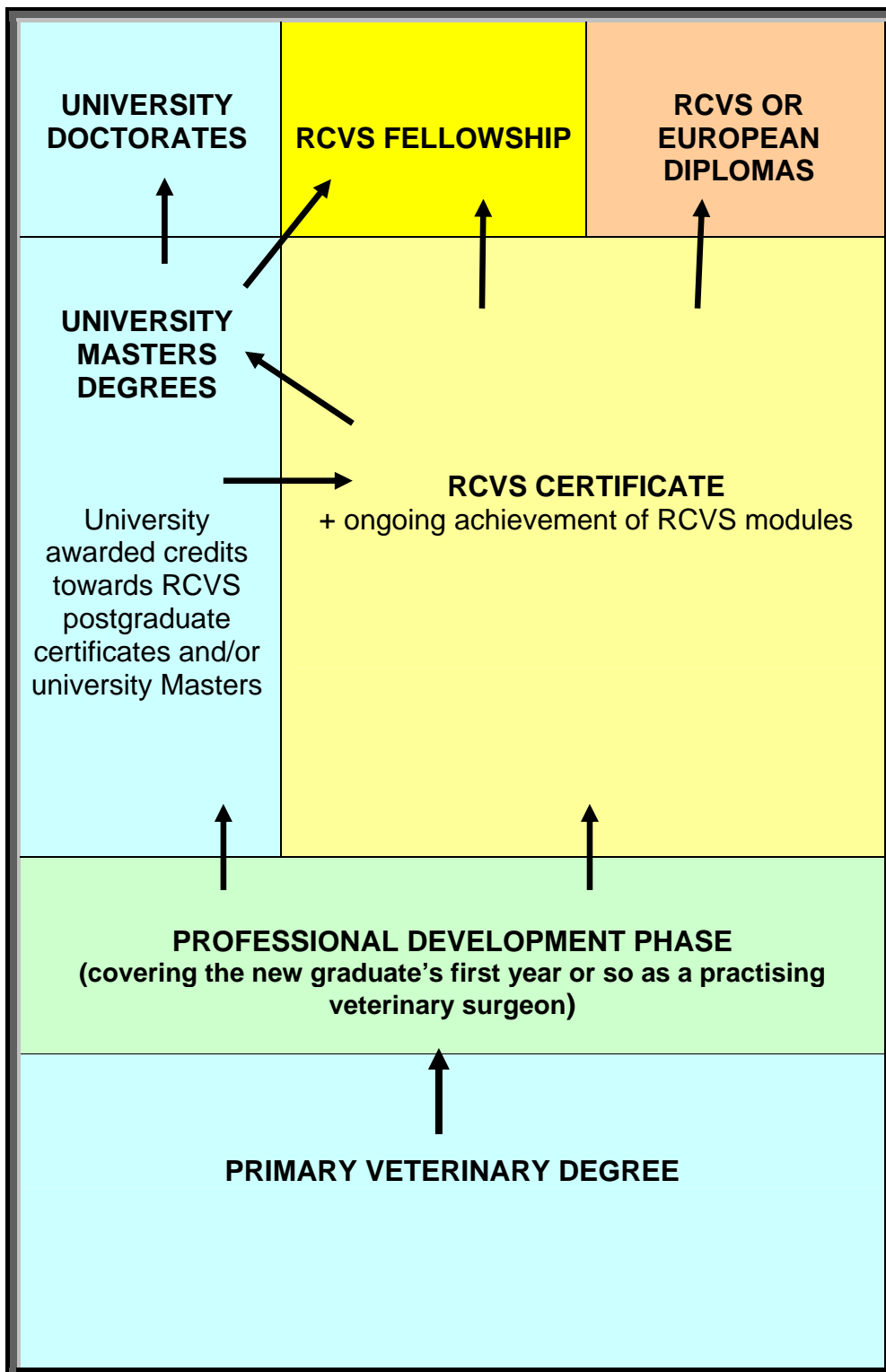
76. Further information about the system, accreditation procedures and modules will appear on the RCVS website. In the meantime, if you have any queries about the system, please contact the RCVS Head of Education, Freda Andrews, by email at f.andrews@rcvs.org.uk, or Elizabeth Barter, Education Officer, e.barter@rcvs.org.uk
77. Alternatively, you can write to RCVS at the following address:

Education Department
Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons
Belgravia House
62 -64 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 2AF

Tel: 0207 222 2001
Fax: 0207 202 0702

Website: www.rcvs.org.uk

VETERINARY POSTGRADUATE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK



RCVS 'Recognised Specialist' status is open to those who hold a Diploma or equivalent level qualification.

ANNEX 2

Structure of the Modular Postgraduate Certificate

A-PKS.1

15 credits
Professional
Key Skills

A total of 60 credits is required for the Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice (CertAVP)

For the CertAVP it is necessary to complete the A-PKS.1 (**15 credits**)

B-CKS.0

5 credits
Clinical Key
Skills

And the B-CKS.0 and another B module (**total 15 credits**)

(The B-CKS.0 module only needs to be taken **once** in conjunction with another B module; additional B modules are normally worth 10 credits)

B-SAP.1

10 credits
Small Animal
Practice

B-PAP.2

10 credits
Production
Animal
Practice

B-EP.3

10 credits
Equine
Practice

B-LAS.4

10 credits
Laboratory
Animal
Science

B-VPH.5

20 credits
Veterinary
Public Health

B-ZM.6

10 credits
Zoological
Medicine

B-XX.7

10 credits
Other

C-XX.1

Other
10 credits

C-XX.6

Other
10 credits

C-XX.5

Other
10 credits

C-XX.4

Other
10 credits

C-XX.3

Other
10 credits

C-XX.2

Other
10 credits

And either three C modules or a combination of B and C modules (**30 credits**)

Alternatively, modules can be taken and accredited individually.