

Period of supervised adaptation for veterinary nurses trained outside the UK

Introduction

All veterinary nurses in the UK have to be registered with the RCVS. Registered Veterinary Nurses (RVNs) must follow the code of professional conduct (the *Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses*). Veterinary nurses who have trained outside the UK are not permitted to work as a veterinary nurse in the UK unless they have permission in writing from the RCVS to do so.

The Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 defines veterinary surgery and sets out the circumstances in which non-veterinary surgeons i.e veterinary nurses and student veterinary nurses may legally carry out veterinary treatments on animals. Veterinary Surgeons may delegate a veterinary nurse or student veterinary nurse to administer minor medical treatment (for example, administering medication) or undertake minor surgery as long as the conditions of the act are followed.

Veterinary nurses who have completed their training overseas are also permitted to be delegated medical treatments and minor surgical procedures only if **they are enrolled for a Period of Supervised Adaptation (PSA) for veterinary nurses trained outside the UK**. Veterinary nurses trained outside the UK who have not enrolled for the PSA are not permitted to work as a veterinary nurse.

This document provides details of the process a veterinary nurse trained outside the UK needs to follow if they would like to work in a UK veterinary practice before entering the register of veterinary nurses.

Enrolling for the Period of Supervised Adaptation for veterinary nurses trained outside the UK.

If you wish to work as a veterinary nurse in the UK you must apply to enter the register of veterinary nurses. **Stage one** of the application involves you having your qualification and experience assessed and compared with the RCVS Day One Competences for Veterinary Nurses and the RCVS Day One Skills for Veterinary Nurses. You will be informed by letter if you are required to undertake a Period of Supervised Adaptation before entering the register. The letter will detail the length of the adaptation and any evidence you will need to obtain/provide during that time.

In addition if you have been informed that you need to pass the RCVS pre-registration examination and you are employed in a veterinary practice you will need to enrol for the Period of Supervised Adaptation.

If you have been informed that you need to pass the RCVS pre-registration examination but you are not intending to work in a veterinary practice, you do not need to enrol for the Period of Supervised Adaptation.

You may undertake the PSA in any UK veterinary practice. If you change employment during your PSA you must inform the RCVS and complete a fresh application for your next employment.

Once you are enrolled you and your veterinary practice will receive a letter confirming your status. You may then work as a veterinary nurse in that practice. If you move practice you must submit a new form. There is no fee for enrolling for the PSA.

PSA enrolment normally lasts for 12 months. In some cases the period will be extended for a specific period of time. This might be because the assessor of the stage one application has indicated that longer than 12 months is required. It may also be possible to extend the period of time if you have not been successful in completing the RCVS pre-registration examination within the 12 months. In this case the RCVS will require evidence that you are actively preparing for the examination. Where it is evident that you are on a 'working holiday' and have no intention of entering the pre-registration examination or applying to enter the register, PSA enrolment will be terminated.

Period of Supervised Adaptation (PSA) Mentor

As a PSA nurse you must work under the supervision of a named veterinary surgeon (MRCVS) on the UK practising part of the Register.

The veterinary surgeon must appoint a mentor or mentor(s) who will assist you to evaluate your strengths and weaknesses in clinical practice and draw up a plan of mentorship. If you are required to produce evidence of your PSA for the RCVS the mentor will declare that you have completed the requirements.

PSA mentors will normally be a UK practising Veterinary surgeon (MRCVS) or a Registered Veterinary Nurse (RVN). The mentor must also be able to recognise competence and provide guidance to the nurse enrolled for a PSA. The mentor should be experienced, competent and confident in their own knowledge and skills and be able to demonstrate best veterinary nursing practice to their PSA nurse. It is therefore not appropriate for a newly qualified nurse or veterinary surgeon to be appointed as a mentor.

PSA evidence

If you have been told that you need to complete the PSA as a compulsory element of your application to register you will be informed in writing of any assessments you need to undertake or evidence you need to produce. This is tailored for each applicant.

If you are registered for the PSA as an optional element of your registration application, i.e to prepare for the pre-registration examinations, you will not be required to produce evidence of your PSA.

Enrolling for the Period of Supervised Adaptation

Once you commence your employment you should contact the RCVS and complete the PSA enrolment form. There is no fee for this enrolment. Your application will need to be signed by your supervising veterinary surgeon and your mentor(s).

You will be informed in writing once the application has been processed (normally within 2 weeks of receipt). If you have not entered the register within 12 months (longer if permitted) we will write to you to find out your circumstances. If you are no longer meeting RCVS requirements your enrolment will be terminated.

The Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 (Schedule 3 Amendment) Order 2002

The Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 defines veterinary surgery and sets out the circumstances in which non-veterinary surgeons may legally carry out veterinary treatments on animals. Dispensations specified for owners of animals (or their employees/members of their household), veterinary nurses and student veterinary nurses are set out in Schedule 3 of the Act.

The provisions of the Act are clear: the law distinguishes between what owners, or their employees/members of their household, can do (minor medical treatments) and what a veterinary surgeon may delegate to Registered Veterinary Nurses RVNs and (supervised) enrolled student veterinary nurses (any medical treatments and minor surgical procedures). The law makes this distinction in order that owners can legally administer simple treatments (such as giving tablets).

RVNs and enrolled student veterinary nurses are clearly identifiable groups of people within the meaning of the Act, as are veterinary students. **No other person, no matter what their job title in practice may be, has a legal dispensation to undertake delegated medical treatments or minor surgical procedures, regardless of how well trained or experienced they are considered to be.**

Student veterinary nurses are included in the legislation because they need to learn, and become competent in, clinical skills. The Act recognises this and therefore stipulates that they must work under the supervision of a veterinary surgeon or RVN. Provided they are properly supervised, student veterinary nurses can, in the course of their training, do anything that may be delegated to a RVN, i.e. they may undertake delegated treatments in order to learn.

Veterinary nurses enrolled for the Period of Supervised Adaptation for veterinary nurses trained outside the UK are classified by the RCVS as 'students' and therefore veterinary surgeons are permitted to delegate medical treatment or minor surgery under the supervision of a veterinary surgeon or registered veterinary nurse. In the case of minor surgery, the supervision must be direct, continuous and personal. Further details about the role of veterinary nurses, student veterinary nurses and lay staff can be found in the supporting guidance accompanying the Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons and Veterinary Nurses. A copy has been provided to you.

What can be delegated?

The Act does not provide a list of minor surgery and medical treatments that can be delegated. This is because it would be impossible to say with any certainty that a given procedure would, in any event, be safe to delegate. Whilst Schedule 3 does not provide a definitive list of permitted delegations, three key factors ought to be considered:

- the nature of the procedure (or treatment), i.e. the level of its complexity
- the individual animal concerned, i.e. species, condition, likelihood of complications, owner's wishes

- the qualifications of the person being delegated to, i.e. Registered or enrolled student veterinary nurse, specific training, experience, confidence, willingness to accept the delegation and the availability of someone more qualified to step in if needed.

The list of RCVS Day One Skills for Veterinary Nurses identifies some of the skills which are deemed to be acts of veterinary surgery. It should be noted this is not a list of all medical treatment and minor surgical procedures that a student or RVN can undertake, it is the minimum requirement of a student in training completing the RCVS Day One Competences for Veterinary Nurses and RCVS Day One Skills for Veterinary Nurses.

Extracts from Schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 – Treatment and operations that may be given or carried out by unqualified persons

Section 19 (4) (b) of the Act allows a person who is not a veterinary surgeon to do “anything specified in Part 1 of Schedule 3 of this Act and not excluded by Part II of that schedule”.

Extract from Part I of the Schedule

1. Any minor medical treatment given to an animal by its owner, or by another member of the household of which the owner is a member, or by a person in the employment of the owner

- 6 Any minor medical treatment or any minor surgery (not involving entry into a body cavity) to any animal by a veterinary nurse if the following conditions are complied with, that is to say:
 - the animal is , for the time being under the care of a registered veterinary surgeon or veterinary practitioner and the medical treatment or minor surgery is carried out by the veterinary nurse at his/her direction
 - the registered veterinary surgeon or veterinary practitioner is the employer or is acting on behalf of the employer of the veterinary nurse; and
 - the registered veterinary surgeon or veterinary practitioner directing the medical treatment or minor surgery is satisfied that the veterinary nurse is qualified to carry out the treatment or surgery.

In this paragraph and in paragraph 7 below;

‘veterinary nurse’ means a nurse whose name is entered in the register of veterinary nurses maintained by the College (RCVS)

7. Any medical treatment or any minor surgery (not involving entry into a body cavity) to any animal by student veterinary nurse if the following conditions are complied with, that is to say:
 - the animal is, for the time being, under the care of a registered veterinary surgeon or veterinary practitioner and the medical treatment or minor surgery is carried out by the student veterinary nurse at his direction and in the course of the student veterinary nurse’s training.

- the treatment or surgery is supervised by a registered veterinary surgeon, veterinary practitioner or veterinary nurse and, in the case of surgery, the supervision is direct continuous and personal; and
- the registered veterinary surgeon or veterinary practitioner is the employer or is acting on behalf of the employer of the student veterinary nurse.

In this paragraph:

‘student veterinary nurse’ means a person enrolled under Veterinary Nurse Registration Rules 2014 made by Council for the purpose of undergoing training as a veterinary nurse at an approved training and assessment centre or a veterinary practice approved by such a centre;

‘approved training and assessment centre’ means a centre approved by the Council for the purpose of training and assessing student veterinary nurses.