

Veterinary Nurses Council

Meeting to be held on Wednesday 28 February 2024 at 10.30am at the Royal College of Nursing, 20 Cavendish Square, London, W1G 0RN

Agenda		Classification ¹	Rationale ²
1.	Apologies for absence	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
2.	Declarations of interest	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
3.	Obituaries	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
4.	Minutes of meeting held on 15 November 2023		
	i. Unclassified minutes	Unclassified	n/a
	ii. Classified appendix	Confidential	1,2,3,4
5.	Matters arising	Oral report	n/a
6.	CEO update	Unclassified	n/a
Matters for decision by VN Council and reports from Committees (unclassified items)			
7.	VN Council - Governance reform	Unclassified	n/a
8.	VN Education Committee		
	Minutes of meeting held on 11 December 2023		
	i. Unclassified minutes	Unclassified	n/a
	ii. Classified appendix	Confidential	2,3,4
Matters for note			
9.	Reports from RCVS Committees		
	9.01 VN Preliminary Investigation Committee	Unclassified	n/a

	9.02 Standards Committee	Oral report	n/a
	9.03 Advancement of the Professions Committee	Oral report	n/a
	9.04 VN Disciplinary Committee	Oral report	n/a
10.	Policy and Public Affairs update	Oral report	n/a
11.	Communications report	Oral report	n/a
12.	VN Council election 2024	Oral report	n/a
13.	VN Register report Registrations, student enrolments, and PSP numbers	Unclassified	n/a
14.	Any other business (unclassified)		
15.	Date of next meeting Wednesday 22 May 2024 at 10.00am.		
Confidential and private items (closed session)			
16.	VN Education Committee confidential items		
	Confidential items from meeting of 11 December 2023	Confidential	2,3,4
17.	Risk Register 17.01 Risk Register annual review 17.02 Items to be added to Risk Register	Confidential	1,2,3,4
18.	RCVS Honours and Awards	Private	5
19.	Items for RCVS Committees	Oral report	
20.	Any other business (confidential items)		
21.	Reflective session		

Annette Amato
Secretary, VN Council
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¹Classifications explained

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation or publication.
Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.

²Classification rationales

Confidential	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To allow the Committee or Council to come to a view itself, before presenting to and/or consulting with others2. To maintain the confidence of another organisation3. To protect commercially sensitive information4. To maintain public confidence in and/or uphold the reputation of the veterinary professions and/or the RCVS
Private	<ol style="list-style-type: none">5. To protect information which may contain personal data, special category data, and/or criminal offence data, as listed under the General Data Protection Regulation

Summary	
Meeting	Veterinary Nurses Council
Date	28 February 2024
Title	15 November 2023 VN Council Minutes
Summary	Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 15 November 2023
Decisions required	To approve the unclassified minutes and classified appendix
Attachments	Classified appendix (confidential)
Author	Annette Amato Committee Secretary a.amato@rcvs.org.uk / 020 7202 0713

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a
Classified appendix	Confidential	1, 2,3,4

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Veterinary Nurses Council

Minutes of the meeting held online via Microsoft Teams on Wednesday 15 November 2023

Members:

Mrs Belinda Andrews-Jones	Chair
Miss Jessica Beckett*	
Miss Linda Belton	Officer Team observer (non-voting)
Mrs Anita Bickerdike	
Miss Alison Carr	
Mrs Susan Howarth	Vice-Chair
Mr Tim Hutchinson	
Mrs Katherine Kissick	
Mrs Donna Lewis	
Mr Matthew Rendle	Vice-Chair
Ms Stephanie Richardson	
Mr Simon Williams	
Miss Holly Witchell	
Professor James Wood	

*Denotes absent

In attendance:

Mrs Annette Amato	Committee Secretary
Mr Luke Bishop	Media and Publications Manager (open session only)
Mrs Julie Dugmore	Director of Veterinary Nursing
Ms Eleanor Ferguson	Registrar
Mrs Victoria Hedges	VN Examinations Quality Lead
Ms Lizzie Lockett	Chief Executive

Apologies for absence

1. Apologies for absence had been received from Jessica Beckett.

Declarations of interest

2. There were no new declarations of interest to report.

Obituaries

- Council noted an obituary for Holly Jones RVN, which had been circulated with the agenda. Council stood to observe a minute's silence for all members of the professions who had passed away since the last meeting.

Minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2023

- The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2023 were approved as a correct record.

Matters arising

- There were no matters arising on the previous Minutes.

CEO update

- The CEO presented a brief oral update on a number of operational matters, and recent activities since the last meeting of Veterinary Nurses Council (VNC).
- The College had hosted the fourth biennial Mind Matters Veterinary Mental Health Research Symposium, where the last of the Sarah Brown Mental Health Research Grants had been given out, for a veterinary nursing project.
- The 1CPD platform had been updated to enhance the support to vets and veterinary nurses in reflection on their Continuing Professional Development (CPD).
- A new RCVS Academy course had been launched to support veterinary nurses returning to clinical practice. This was part of the Return stream of the Workforce Plan.
- The nominations period for the 2024 VN Council election had opened. This item would be covered in more detail in the report from the Media and Publications Manager later in the meeting.
- The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) had granted re-accreditation to the RCVS, for a further period of five years, following the accreditation visit in June 2023. ENQA was the umbrella body that accredited higher education, and aimed to ensure that its members were meeting best practice. The CEO thanked those in the VN and Education teams who had been responsible for putting together the paperwork and participation in the visitation event, for all their hard work.
- Since the last meeting of VNC, the first meeting of the Public Advisory Group (PAG) had taken place. The group comprised approximately 30 members of the public, including animal owners and keepers. The first meeting had taken the form of an induction, to get to know members of the group. The first workstream would be to develop advice (not clinical) for animal owners, to be placed on the RCVS website, on how to get the best out of interactions with vets and veterinary nurses in the practice. This would be led by the Director of Communications. Future work would involve interaction with various RCVS committees, and it was likely that VN Council would be involved at some stage.

13. Another major project which had been initiated was the development of a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) database system, customers in this case being registrants (vets and veterinary nurses) and practices. The current database system no longer supported the required levels of complexity. This would be a major project involving input from all departments over the next 18 months. A project manager had been appointed.
14. The Competition and Markets Authority review of veterinary services in the household pet sector was underway and the College had submitted various data. It was understood that the CMA would report in the New Year.
15. All four sets of planning permission for the new property at Hardwick Street had been obtained, and work was now underway to put out tenders for the various work packages. It was likely that we would be in the new building in the third quarter of 2024. Meanwhile, WeWork, the College's current landlords, had filed for bankruptcy in the US and Canada but it was understood to be 'business as usual' in Europe.
16. As 2024 would be the last year in the current RCVS Strategic Plan, work would begin shortly on the development of the next five-year plan. This would involve engagement with stakeholders, Councils and Committees. There would be opportunities for VN Council members to be involved.

Veterinary Nurse Education Committee (VNEC)

17. Susan Howarth, Chair of the VNEC, presented the unclassified minutes of the meeting of the VNEC held on 12 October 2023, and highlighted a few items.
18. The Committee had agreed to the revision of the Accreditation Statuses for Accredited Education institutions (AEIs). It had been suggested in previous meetings of VNEC that the existing statuses were restrictive and did not allow sufficient flexibility to apply status changes if necessary, during an accreditation period. It had also been felt that the category 'terminal accreditation' could be misleading, as there were different instances where this category could be applied.
19. The new categories agreed by VNEC included an option for Probationary Accreditation, to be applied where a fully accredited programme was deficient in its resources or procedures and had failed to meet the RCVS Standards. The second new category was for Voluntary Terminal Accreditation, which made clear the distinction between those AEIs which had chosen to withdraw from provision and were not necessarily in a high-risk category, and those AEIs for which Terminal Accreditation had been imposed due to not meeting the RCVS Standards.
20. VNEC had agreed the detailed explanatory wording for each of the accreditation categories, which were to be implemented with immediate effect. The list of statuses and the full explanatory wording would be published on the RCVS website with the lists of AEIs.
21. The Committee had approved two new members to the Accreditation Panels. The Committee had received an update on the pre-accreditation support visits to AEIs, as well as a number of updates on quality monitoring and audit activity both for licence to practise and post-registration qualifications, carried out by members of the VN qualifications team.

22. The Committee had been informed that the RCVS was in the final stages of partnering with TestReach Ltd to deliver the Veterinary Nurse pre-registration knowledge multiple choice question (MCQ) examination. TestReach offered the facility to have a question banking system and produce statistics for the examination papers, as well as the provision of live invigilation. This company was also used by the Education Department for delivery of the knowledge section of the Statutory Membership Examination.
23. Council ratified the minutes of the VNEC meeting held on 12 October 2023.

Standards Review

24. The Director of Veterinary Nursing introduced a paper on the need for a review of the RCVS Standards Framework for Veterinary Nurse Education and Training (the Standards), which had previously been ratified by Veterinary Nurses Council (VNC) in November 2019, and implemented in January 2020. In line with RCVS VN quality assurance processes, the Standards were due for review in 2024, although it was not envisaged that a major overhaul would be required.
25. It was proposed that there should be a small task and finish working group, reporting to VNEC, to review the Standards. The proposed group, supported by the Director of Veterinary Nursing and the VN Qualifications Lead, should comprise:
 - Chair – member of Veterinary Nurses' Council
 - Two Veterinary Nurse Education Committee members – both the independent Higher and Further Education Regulatory experts, to ensure continuing compliance with national regulatory requirements.
26. The working group would agree its terms of reference and develop a timeline for consultation and completion. It was envisaged that the new Standards Framework would be agreed by VNC and be ready for implementation for the new the academic year in September 2024.
27. The group would report to VNC via the Veterinary Nurse Education Committee. A specific paper detailing the process and consultation responses along with any proposed amendments would be presented to VNC. All proposed amendments would be detailed as tracked changes complete with rationale, and the paper would be brought to the May 2024 meeting of VNC.
28. In response to a query, it was confirmed that one of the independent regulatory experts on VNEC was a veterinary nurse, and the other was not.
29. Council was in agreement with the proposal as set out in the paper. The question of the Chair of the group was considered. It was suggested that it may be helpful for a person other than an educationalist to be the Chair, to give a different perspective, and to spread the workload of Council members. It was agreed that VNC members should be given time to consider whether to put themselves forward as Chair of the group, before a decision was taken.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

30. Stephanie Richardson presented the Minutes of the CPD Policy and Compliance Subcommittee held on 27 October 2023 and highlighted a few items from the meeting.
31. The 1CPD platform had been updated so that hours of CPD would not be counted unless they had been reflected upon. The Subcommittee had spent some time discussing reflection - how to raise awareness, how to encourage reflection and how to remove the anxiety which some members had around reflection. Additional guidance had been included on the website, and CPD providers had been encouraged to allow time at the end of an event to allow for reflection.
32. Following from the report at the previous meeting regarding information provided in support of exemption requests which may have drawn attention to matters relevant to the individual's fitness to practise, it was reported that advice had been sought from the Registrar. The Registrar had suggested there should be a declaration added to the exemption application form asking the applicant to declare that the matters relevant to their request for an exemption did not affect their fitness to practise.
33. There had been some discussion on follow-up for non-compliant members.

Reports from RCVS Committees

Registered Veterinary Nurse Preliminary Investigation Committee (RVN PIC)

34. Council noted the report of the work of the RVN PIC since September 2023 that had been circulated with the agenda.

Standards Committee

35. Matthew Rendle reported on the unclassified items from the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 13 November 2023. This had included discussion on chapter 23 of the supporting guidance on the Code of Professional Conduct regarding cold calling, and on chapter 28, there had been discussion on modernisation of the guidance to reflect information on the use of social media. The Committee had also started to discuss the case studies that had been approved and forwarded by VNC, for inclusion on the website.

Advancement of the Professions Committee (APC)

36. There was nothing to report from the Advancement of the Professions Committee.

Policy and Public Affairs report

37. The Chair reported that there would be a drop-in session at the House of Lords in December, in conjunction with BVNA, to help support and advise in connection with future changes in legislation.

Communications report

38. The Media and Publications Manager provided an overview of recent VN-related activities in the Comms Department.
39. The deadline date for submissions of nominations for RCVS Honours and Awards would be Friday 15 December 2023. Social media publicity was focusing on a different award each week. Publicity for the VN Golden Jubilee Award included interviews with previous recipients, and there had been quite significant engagement to date. RCVS and VN Council members would be able to make nominations for Honorary Associateship of the RCVS, as this was an award open to non-veterinary professionals who had made contributions in the veterinary sphere. Council was reminded that VNs were eligible to be nominated for various other RCVS awards as well as the Golden Jubilee award, including the Compassion Award, Impact Award, International Award, Inspiration Award and Student Community Award. Council members were encouraged to spread the word about these awards.
40. The election nomination period for VN and RCVS Councils would open in the next few days. A revised information pack was being prepared for the website, and the web pages were in the process of being finalised. Case studies from current VN Council members would be included, and thanks were given to those who had contributed.
41. The coming week would see the launch of Disability History Month. The RCVS had provided some content, which aligned well with the RCVS Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. In the early part of 2024, the RCVS would be publishing the results of its survey on disability and chronic illness. Additional myth-busting content around disability would be provided in conjunction with the British Veterinary Chronic Illness Support (BVCIS) organisation.
42. Forthcoming events included the London Vet Show starting the following day, with a Sustainability – Carbon neutral surgery interactive session on sustainability and carbon neutral surgery chaired by RCVS President Sue Paterson along with an ENT NHS surgeon and a sustainable healthcare expert.
43. Since the last meeting of VN Council, a new edition of *VN Education* e-newsletter had been produced, with a focus on changes to the VN Education audit strategy. This had been circulated to all VN Council members.

Any other business (unclassified)

44. There was no other business.

Date of next meeting

45. The next meeting of Council would take place on Wednesday 28 February 2024. This would be an in-person meeting, to be held at the Royal College of Nursing.

Summary	
Meeting	Veterinary Nurses Council
Date	28 February 2024
Title	CEO update, including progress against Strategic Plan
Summary	This paper offers a summary of activity against the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan, as submitted to RCVS Council 18 January 2024.
Decisions required	To note; questions welcomed
Attachments	None
Author	Lizzie Lockett CEO l.lockett@rcvs.org.uk

Classifications		
Document	Classification	Rationales
Paper	Unclassified	n/a

CEO update, including progress against Strategic Plan



Background

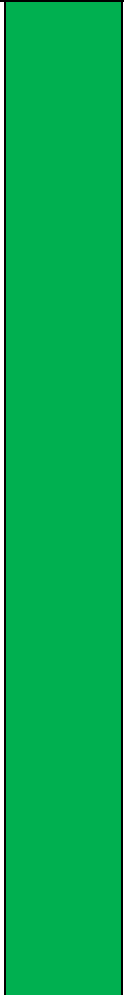
1. The RCVS Strategic Plan 2020-2024 was approved at the RCVS Council meeting in January 2020 and came into immediate effect. The full report, including all of the narrative, together with case studies from the previous plan's successes, can be found here: <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/publications/rcvs-strategic-plan-2020-2024/>
2. At its meeting in July 2020, the Officer Team felt it appropriate that an update be given to Council three times a year – in September, January and June – and information about a specific action can be made available to any Council member on request in between times. For each action, responsibilities, recent activities and next steps have been identified in the following table, alongside a Red/Amber/Green (RAG) rating, to show progress compared to what was anticipated at this point in the Strategic Plan's implementation.
3. Work to develop a new strategic plan will start in January 2024.
4. Outside of those changes noted in the Strategic Plan table to follow, since the 9 November 2023 Council meeting, we have also:
 - a. Hosted a session on sustainability with the UK Healthcare Alliance on Climate Change at the London Vet Show
 - b. Issued various statements and pieces of guidance on the XL Bully legislation
 - c. Held a successful Fellowship Day at One Great George Street, including a 'Fellows of the Future' student research competition, workshops on sustainability and behaviourism, welcoming 34 new Fellows, hearing from guest speaker Dame Sally Davies and also electing a new Vice-Chair, Dr Niall Connell
 - d. Launched our new Veterinary Clinical Careers Pathway (VCCP) project
 - e. Started a new series of Mind Matters campfire chats, with discussion on 'Self-care through winter', and a new series of Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training courses
 - f. Opened the RCVS and VN Councils election nomination period
 - g. Donated the £4,000 President's Christmas Box to the Villiers Park Education Trust, in support of its widening participation work
 - h. Welcomed a new CEO of RCVS Knowledge, Katie Mantell
 - i. Held a drop-in session for MPs at the Houses of Parliament, supported by the British Veterinary Nursing Association, to promote the need for a new Veterinary Surgeons Act
 - j. Joined forces with the British Veterinary Chronic Illness Society to support UK Disability History Month
 - k. Kicked off our new customer relationship management project
 - l. Approved the setting up of a Working Group on Mandatory Practice Regulation
 - m. Approved an expansion of the pre-registration exam for VNs trained overseas, to include a knowledge-based component as well as a practical exam
 - n. Launched a new Academy course on client confidentiality
 - o. Held the second meeting of our Public Advisory Group, with a focus on developing advice for clients on how to get the best out of their interactions with veterinary professionals
 - p. Received a record number of nominations for the RCVS Honours and Awards

A: Clarity

Ambition: to ensure that we have clarity of purpose and that our internal and external stakeholders and service-users understand our role in the world. We will endeavour to become a proactive regulator that remains a step ahead, even in the face of constant change and uncertainty. We will listen widely, consult meaningfully, make confident decisions, then communicate with clarity, appreciating that the final outcome may not suit everyone.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
<p>1. Continue, via the work of the Veterinary Legislation Working Party (LWP) and other groups, to review the regulatory landscape to ensure we develop world-leading, robust standards and approaches that are grounded in evidence and risk-based, in order to safeguard animal health and welfare, and public health, and maintain trust in the veterinary professions.</p>	<p>Exec Office/ Ed/VN</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful event to promote the need for new legislation at the House of Lords in October 2022 and parliamentary drop-in sessions in April 2023 and November 2023. New microsites built to support the argument, which were highly commended in the 2023 MemCom awards. Two educational webinars took place during May 2023 with RCVS and VN Council members, and representatives of BVA and the British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA). Defra supportive, progress now depends on available time. CVO has gone on record with support and BVA has included in their 2024 'manifesto'. Discussion around governance to take place at January 2024 Council meeting. • Finance and Resources Committee (FRC) agreed the formation of a new Working Group on Mandatory Practice Regulation in November 2023; will meet early 2024. • First accreditations using the new educational standards and methodology were completed in Liverpool (March 2023), and Aberystwyth / RVC (May 2023). • Launched a comprehensive new online training programme for accreditation panel members via RCVS Academy, with positive initial feedback. Panel member feedback following new accreditation processes also positive. A 'lessons learnt' document is being developed to share with Education and Audit and Risk Committees to ensure we continue on a journey of quality improvement. • The evidence base informing the new accreditation standards for vet degrees has been published in the <i>Journal of Veterinary Medical Education</i>. • Following VN support meetings, there have been three successful accreditations.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
<p>2. Ensure that we are addressing what matters to our stakeholders and that we horizon-scan for issues that are beyond the scope of our immediate view. For example, regulation of new technologies, regulation of practices, review of our concerns and disciplinary process, and regulation of the wider veterinary team and the environment in which they work.</p>	<p>APC/ LWP/ PICDCL /EC</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulation of the wider vet team is linked to new legislation. We continue to investigate the most appropriate groups to bring under any future regulatory umbrella, for example, the first behavioural medicine roundtable was hosted by the Fellowship Science Advisory Panel (FSAP) in May 2023 and there was a popular and lively workshop at the recent (November 2023) Fellowship Day. An FSAP working party is investigating whether and how animal behavioural medicine should be regulated, the next meeting will take place in January 2024. • The new concerns process has been launched and the website has been updated. • The new Charter Case Committee (CCC) members have been trained, and also Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) members. The CCC was launched on 25 August 2023. • New plans for Extra Mural Studies (EMS) have been published and communicated. New policy now approved by Education Committee (EC) for implementation in autumn 2024. We are hosting a Q&A session with the Veterinary Schools Council Education Cttee and EMS co-ordinators on 9 January to answer any questions they may have. • VCCP project agreed by Council in November 2023 and three workstreams will commence early 2024. They are 1) Development of Specialty training for GPs; 2) Definition of roles; and, 3) Development of flexible routes to specialisation. • New Under Care/Out-of-Hours guidance came into force on 1 September 2023. Webinars have been held and case studies and FAQs produced. Final piece of guidance, on prescription of endo- and ectoparasiticides, will come into force mid-January 2024. • New guidance on canine artificial insemination published. • Plans under way for a roundtable on artificial intelligence.
<p>3. Review whether we can take a more proactive role around breaches of the Veterinary Surgeons Act involving unqualified individuals, or courses that purport to lead to registration but do not, both through education to end-users of veterinary services, and working more actively to support those wishing to raise concerns with the relevant authorities.</p>	<p>Registrar</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following approval at the March 2023 meeting of Council, the 12-month trial of a protocol for the private prosecution of breaches of the Veterinary Surgeons Act was launched on 1 April. This work is now reported via the PIC/Disciplinary Committee Liaison Committee.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
<p>4. Work with our partners overseas to ensure that the UK remains relevant in the veterinary world post-EU exit, including sharing knowledge, marketing our standards and services, and building an engaged diaspora of members of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (MsRCVS) and registered veterinary nurses (RVNs). Ensure there is a global element to all that we do, and that our international members feel engaged and included.</p>	<p>APC/ FVE/ EC</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue improving engagement with overseas members and run a regular blog in RCVS News from overseas-practising members. • Work ongoing to develop more permanent solution to loss of mutual recognition of professional qualifications – paper with Defra but no response has been received. • First consultative accreditation visit to an EU school under our 2023 accreditation standards took place in May 2023. • Continuing strong relations with International Accreditors Working Group (IAWG), Federation of Veterinarians of Europe, Mind Matters International, American Association of Veterinary State Boards, American Veterinary Medical Association and International Veterinary Regulators Network (IVRN), with attendance/presentation at in-person meetings during the year. • Next meeting of Mind Matters International on 30 January to see if there is potential for a collaborative event later in the year and to showcase recent initiatives. The Veterinary Practice Board of Western Australia is the latest organisation to sign up to our joint statement on veterinary mental health. • Attended a useful meeting of IAWG in Melbourne in July 2024, where RCVS presented a proposal for adopting a more environmentally sustainable approach to joint international accreditations involving visitors trained in the standards and processes of more than one agency. Previously there has been resistance, but this proposal was received positively and all IAWG members agreed to take it to their decision-making committees. Since then, the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council's Veterinary Schools Accreditation Advisory Committee (AVBC VSAAC) has approved the proposals and would like to pilot with us in 2024/5. • Involved in ESNO (for European specialist nurses) discussions on workforce shortages and retention, culminating in a report to the European Commission. • Involved in the review and revision of the Accreditation Committee of Veterinary Nurse Education (ACOVENE) Standards. • Academy course developed for overseas vets / VNs applying to register launched. • There are opportunities to promote and 'sell' some of our initiatives overseas, but UK work takes priority during this busy time. Trademarking is being considered. • CEO joined FVE taskforce on development of European Veterinary Foundation, which met in person in December 2023.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
5. Build a closer relationship between the College, the professions and the public by continuing our outreach programme. Review how we gain input from stakeholders at all levels, including the development of an improved process for seeking input from members of the public.	APC/ Comms/ Exec		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment for Public Advisory Group completed and first meeting held on 22 September, with second scheduled for 10 January. Survey of PAG members completed to gain initial input into first workstream on animal owner advice, plus suggestions for new workstreams. Programme of attendance at events and congresses for 2023 completed with planning underway for 2024, to include a return to public outreach events and careers/science festivals. Survey planned to evaluate effectiveness of RCVS coms and engagement activities, and review vet/VN preferences, to inform new comms strategy. Chronic Illness and Disability Survey for vets, nurses, student vets and SVNs gained over 3,000 responses. It will be used to inform our own EDI activities and as an opportunity to provide landmark statistics and insight to the veterinary professions. The outcomes of this research have taken longer than planned but will be published early in 2024. We are thankful to the over 1,000 respondents who have said they would like to be involved with follow up work, and we will be looking to continue this engagement. Fellowship activities continue, and will include in 2024 a new set of Fellows on Tour events at UK veterinary schools. We took part in a Federation of Veterinarians of Europe Survey Working Group and that data is now available, to provide a useful comparator for some areas of the veterinary profession across Europe. Meanwhile the 2024 Surveys of the Veterinary Professions will be going out into the field in January 2024. Stakeholder perception research will take place as part of the development of the new strategic plan and a stakeholder engagement session is planned for March 2024. A meeting will take place with the BVA in Q1 to discuss whether a second 'Vet Futures' type project would be appropriate.
6. Establish clarity around a data-sharing commitment, and ensure that our views, our data & our insights are shared regularly in an easy-to-search way, for example, easy-to-find FAQ on key issues, insights gained from concerns & complaints data, and self-service facts and figures about the professions. Make available accessible & anonymised versions of the data we hold to all stakeholders to enable them to generate value and insights for the sector.	FRC/ Digital/ Policy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop dashboard on key metrics - part of KPI project (see later) – paper going to Council January 2024. Data management system (CRM) review project has commenced, with Smart Impact chosen as supplier. Additional data being gathered about reasons for leaving the RCVS Registers – reported to Registration Committee. Project to support Defra ref farm attestations and links to RCVS Register completed and launched December 2023. See A5 above ref Surveys of the Professions.

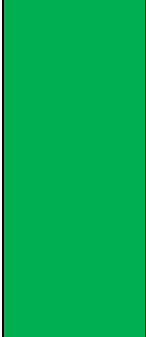
Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
7. Plan and implement a cycle of review and improvement for our educational standards and processes, to ensure we continue to take a leadership role with our international partners.	Ed Cttee/ VN Ed Cttee		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RCVS Academy for accreditation panellists launched, initial feedback positive. • First accreditation events under new standards have been completed successfully in March 2023 (Liverpool) and April (Aber/RVC). Evaluation being analysed to inform quality improvement to our processes. A report from the first year of accreditations under the new system will be published in early spring. • As outlined above, Veterinary Clinical Career Pathway workstreams to begin early 2024. • Following VN support meetings, eight successful accreditation events. • Successful reaccreditation by ENQA received. • VN Standards Framework for Veterinary Nurse Education and Training review commenced autumn 2023. • A review of the veterinary Day One Competences is planned for 2024.
8. Ensure clarity of appeal across all the areas where we make decisions, modernising where appropriate; where appeal is unavailable, clearly justify.	Legal services		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration appeals process to be considered now MRPQ no longer exists. • Appeal process for Statutory Membership Examination to be considered. • Review and revise VN accreditation appeals process.

B: Compassion

Ambition: to be a compassionate upstream regulator and a supportive Royal College by ensuring that high standards continue to be met while working in an empathetic way that respects all of our stakeholders and service-users as individuals. We will recognise that a compassionate approach involves helping members of the veterinary team build the skills and knowledge they need to meet our standards, which is ultimately in the interests of animal health and welfare.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
<p>1. Endeavour to ensure that the College is seen as approachable, helpful, fair and accessible to all.</p>	<p>All</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report of web content review now received, and work underway to update key areas of website with consideration being given to information accuracy, content design, language style, accessibility, diversity and inclusion and search engine optimisation (SEO). See also A5 above ref engagement. • Review of appeals processes ongoing, see A8 above. • Improving the way we communicate Council and committee activities as part of the Council Culture project. • Continue with VN support package, see A7 above. • Have supported refugees through the Statutory Membership Examination process and the first one has now passed and will register with us. • Questions around vet and nurse perceptions of the College will be included in the Surveys of the Professions.
<p>2. Enable our teams to deliver compassionate regulation by providing structures, training and support to ensure they can help vets and nurses meet the standards required in a compassionate way, and take ownership and communicate clearly when things don't go to plan. Recognising that, in order to achieve this, our team members must also feel well supported and that they are compassionately treated.</p>	<p>People</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peakon (staff engagement survey) data regularly reviewed to benchmark how well supported staff feel. • New Staff Network Group – Alliance for Inclusion - set up to help build an inclusive working community at the College. • New staff training priorities fall out of 'My Progress' annual reviews; this now has greater focus on values. What it takes to become a 'learning organisation' was discussed at the 2023 staff away day and initiatives being planned. • New online learning hub for staff under development (aligned with RCVS Academy), and new intranet, due to be launched in Q1 2024. • Thematic review of data from exit interviews now going to Senior Team. • Dedicated Talent resource appointed, full review of career website and assessment material ongoing. • Growth mindset group in place to encourage different ways of thinking, was commended by those engaged with it as part of our end of year review. • Training support policy near completion to provide greater clarity on learning outcomes where financial support is provided. • Manager charter developed to support new and existing managers. • Additional mental health and wellbeing support introduced via MyMynd, with positive initial feedback.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
3. Review our concerns process through the eyes of each of our stakeholder and service-user groups to ensure that it is fair, forward-thinking and compassionate, and set out a programme of quality improvement.	ProfCon MMI		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion of ProfCon Investigation Support Service; article May 2023 RCVS News and flagging to VetLife for appropriate signposting. Registrar took part in 'myth-busting' panel ref complaints at BVA Live 2023. Public Advisory Group will support us developing more compassionate approach for animal owners. Academy courses on resolving complaints in practice, and Complaints: communication, confidence and compassion now available. Asked to join the Australian Health Practitioners Regulatory Authority Working Group on minimising distress for practitioners involved in a regulatory process, which will help us to share / understand good practice.
4. Help our regulated professionals to meet the standards expected of them by their peers, the public and society at large by launching the RCVS Academy, which will house a range of online educational tools to help veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and other potential associates of the College understand what is expected of them in terms of meeting standards, and to support them acquiring relevant knowledge and staying up to date in a creative, accessible and inspiring way.	Exec ALL		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Academy courses being launched regularly, most recent on client confidentiality; over 12,000 learners have accessed the Academy since launch (June 2022); regular contact with advisory panel of vets and nurses ensures content is relevant. Presentation on successes so far made at FRC in November 2023. Development of the EMS information 'hub' ongoing, to provide an engaging online area accessible for the three main stakeholder groups, students, providers and school staff. Will focus on 'what good looks like' and include the 'difficult' challenges such as how to empower students to deal with inappropriate behaviours on placement, and support for schools with those difficult conversations when exploring concerns raised and students and addressing issues with providers.
5. Continue to support the mental health and wellbeing of members of the veterinary team, and our College staff, through the Mind Matters Initiative under its workstreams of 'prevent, protect and support' (see www.vetmindmatters.org), and also help veterinary professionals to take account of the mental health of those with whom they come into contact.	APC		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MMI Strategy and Evaluation documents published. Collaboration with BSAVA for 2024 Congress content underway Successful MMI Symposium hosted, with good feedback from delegates. Next event will be in 2025. First MHFA events of 2024 sold out within two weeks, more planned inc one specifically for the Association of Veterinary Students. MMI attended a number of smaller CPD events for the professions, and will continue to undertake this style of outreach in 2024. Part of the Worshipful Company of Farmers Rural Health and Wellbeing Forum, contributing a veterinary voice and continuing to build and collaborate in the rural community. New training course looking at key 'transitions' being designed for pilot. New MMI Lead appointed and starting at the end of the month. See A4 for MMI International work.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
<p>6. Continue to foster a reflective learning culture amongst members of the veterinary team, so that they can continue to grow and develop in a supportive, no-blame environment.</p>	<p>APC Ed Cttee</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective CPD and use of 1CPD app now mandatory – communications and promotion have taken place and will continue. • Evaluation of VetGDP Adviser e-learning highly positive. • Discussions remain ongoing with NHS regarding relaunch of Edward Jenner Leadership MOOC. • New courses such as unconscious bias will be launched, via the Academy, this will be mandatory for Fellowship assessors as part of the drive to widen the diversity and inclusion to Fellowship. Other new materials on Leadership being created, especially profiling VN leaders. Existing courses will be up for review later this year.

C: Courage

Ambition: we will have the courage to take a leadership role within the professions, to ensure that the pervading culture is healthy, sustainable, inclusive, innovative and respectful; through this, will develop confident veterinary professionals.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
<p>1. Continue to seek culture change within the wider professions around help-seeking behaviour to support both mental and physical health, learning culture, leadership, innovation, sustainability and diversity.</p>	<p>DIG MMI APC Education</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See B5 for MMI and B6 for learning culture. • VN version of religious clothing document under development. • Joint APC / EC / VN Council project has started to produce guidance for EMS, intra-mural rotations (IMR) providers and wider workplaces on supporting those with neurodiversity. • Fellowship Science Advisory Panel project on Net Zero practice moving forward with Chairs appointed to the Medicine WG and the Surgery WG. • Sustainability is a key aspect of Hardwick Street refurbishment project. • Supported the UKHACC Green Surgery launch, including the Chair speaking at the London Vet Show. • ViVet strategy under review at present. • Paper on learning culture in VetGDP published in <i>Journal of Veterinary Medical Education</i>. • Poster presentation on BAME Recommendations and Religious Clothing Guidance at July Association for the Study of Medical Education EDI event, re-organised in-person conference happening in spring 2024 where we will present in person. • VetGDP for returners now launched to help people to return to veterinary work following a career break, planning promotional push. • Chronic illness survey has now been completed and is currently being analysed by our research partners (more detail above). • 'RVN – Starting Out' course, designed to support the transition from student to registered nurse, launched May 2023. • Course under development to support those returning after a career break. • Menopause tool kit launched as part of VN Futures (VNF). • Flexible working toolkit being developed as part of VNF. • Work has started on a new Academy course, open to all, on Unconscious Bias, and also one specifically for Fellowship Assessors. • President's Christmas donation given to WP charity and awareness raised as part of communication of this. • Joint work with VSC and BVA continues to better support students on EMS.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
2. Celebrate the art as well as the science of veterinary medicine and ensure that wider professional skills are properly and credibly supported.	APC RCVSK Education		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvements to honours and awards process agreed at June Council and record number of nominations received for 2024 round. New building will focus on history and future of veterinary practice – thought to be given to commissioning new items for historic collection. Education space for school-age children planned for new building to encourage better understanding of veterinary profession from a younger age and potentially encourage applications to vet school from a wider pool. The introduction of the new Fellowship categories has brought in a wider diversity of Fellows, whose expertise on the art and science of veterinary medicine needs to be harnessed. Wider skills continue to be championed through the CertAVP and the new vet school standards, and will be a key consideration for the Veterinary Clinical Careers Pathway project, including speciality training for GPs.
3. Work with other stakeholders to retain skills and talent within the professions, by developing return-to-work options that build confidence in those who have had a career break, for whatever reason.	<i>Education</i> <i>MMI</i> <i>ViVet</i> <i>Academy</i> <i>Exec</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce Action Plan outlines range of actions to be taken under this heading. Blog on progress so far part of December 2023 RCVS News. A series of webinars with the wider profession have now taken place – see A2. The Diversity and Inclusion Group (DIG) is due to focus next on an inclusive recruitment toolkit to support organisations to consider their recruitment process from job description thorough to induction, which should impact on recruitment and retention. VetGDP is available for those returning to the profession. Compulsory for those away from the profession for more than five years, optional for those away for a shorter period. Now covered in VetGDP coms. Work ongoing to understand recruitment, retention and return activities within the government / public health veterinary sector and develop an action plan based on gap analysis. Nurse Return course available for all nurses returning to the Register. Compulsory for those who have been off the Register for five years or more.
4. Ensure a pathway for career progression for vets and nurses via postgraduate/post-qualification accreditations and qualifications – to meet the needs of vets and nurses at all stages of their careers.	<i>Education</i> <i>VN</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fifth provider of CertAVN approved. As outlined at A2 above, the VCCP workstreams will start shortly. VN career progression linked to LWP proposals (see A1). Proposals under development for the Advanced Practitioner role for VNs Pilot for second stage of VN Prescriber research complete, and changes agreed for full survey, along with selection of sample. Next step sign off final questionnaire and related documents/coms. Survey will be open for approx three weeks; expected launch February. Analysis likely completed summer. Actions within Workforce Action Plan also consider fulfilling careers.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
5. Develop extra-mural studies (EMS) and work experience opportunities at the College, together with more opportunities for veterinary professionals and members of the public to become engaged with the work of the regulator at first hand and gain an understanding of its complexities.	<i>Comms APC</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop modules for Academy to better explain our key functions. • Successful EMS placement programme, jointly with Veterinary Policy Research Foundation, ongoing. • Officers attended a range of freshers' weeks and careers fairs at the vet schools in autumn 2023. VN school induction weeks also attended. • CEO undertaking talks with practices - including those on new grad schemes – to demystify the work of the College. • Talks given to new graduates on training schemes. • RVNs working at the College were recently profiled as part of VN Awareness Month; an RVN group has been set up to support the professional identity of RVNs working at the College and part of this will be showcasing the work of the College and the opportunities to be had.
6. Create an innovation funding pot to enable the professions to help solve regulation and professional standards issues that matter to them.	<i>Exec FRC</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch bursary scheme – needs name! • Consideration of challenge prize on hold due to other priorities. It will also be important to ensure the professions have the right skills and approach to innovation in order to maximise the opportunity.
7. Continue to develop the Fellowship into a learned society that reflects the varied achievements of the veterinary profession; encourages the advancement of standards; and, develops public awareness of veterinary medicine and science, for example, via the development of a Fellow on the Public Understanding of Veterinary Science.	<i>Fellows APC</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful Fellowship Day hosted in November, sold out early on, repeated management of this to ensure all tickets utilised. High levels of engagement on the day, new interactive format working well. Locations and venues for this year's event are being reviewed. • New Academy course on unconscious bias and training for Fellowship assessors will be launched this quarter in time for this year's applications to be assessed. • Fellows spokesperson list to be created, to identify individuals who can be media trained and give views on relevant topics (NB care to be taken not to conflict with regulatory role). • Next steps on sustainability will be worked upon following feedback from Fellowship Day session and others such as LVS. This will be in collaboration with RCVS Knowledge as the evidence gap is a significant element that needs resolution to enable people to make confident decisions.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
8. Review new ways of reaching consensus and driving change within our leadership and governance structure.	Exec Officers		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New induction process was rolled out with new Council members. • Reflection sessions at Council meetings to discuss how effectively business was conducted continue. • Workshop sessions to be planned with external speakers on board effectiveness. • Chairs training took place in September; other training sessions in the pipeline.
9. Work with the BVA and the BVNA to evaluate the success of the first action plans for Vet Futures and VN Futures respectively, assess whether the ambitions remain relevant, and develop new action plans accordingly. Work with the FVE to support the delivery of Vet Futures Europe.	Exec		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case studies on VF successes need to be refreshed, to form part of VF evaluation document (joint with BVA). Some delays due to resourcing. • VF part two under consideration – meeting in the pipeline. • VN Futures evaluation report published in September 2022; animation outlining achievements and future activities launched at BVA Live May 2023. • VNF sessions held at BVNA Congress Oct 2023.

D: Confidence

Ambition: in order to deliver our Strategic Plan, we must not only have the mandate that is secured by the Veterinary Surgeons Act and our Royal Charter, but also the confidence to succeed that will be brought by the right underpinning – the governance, people, finance, communications and IT structures that are crucial to our success.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
1. Review the bedding-in of the 2018 Legislative Reform Order to ensure that our Council and committee structure is efficient, effective, and transparent, and provides the right level of strategic oversight coupled with skills-based input to allow the College to function to the best of its abilities.	Officers Exec		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scoping for informal review - although this may be superseded by work considering new governance structure as part of legislative changes (meanwhile, second five-year review for the LRO that separated PIC and DC from Council underway with Defra). Governance Manual in progress. Action plan to resolve gaps vs Charity Code being worked through by Senior Team and reviewed by Audit and Risk Committee.
2. Review the structure of all of our groups operating below committee level, to ensure the right mix of skills are available to tackle the tasks at hand and that each group has clear membership, purpose, principles, time-frame and sense of what success will look like.	FRC Ops		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills being considered as part of Council Culture project. Annual review of delegation scheme now routine and all groups now have ToR and greater clarity. New paper templates under development, along with training for secretariats. Each Committee considers its 'child' groups (subcommittees, working groups etc) as part of the review at the end of each presidential year.
3. Develop and embed a meaningful dashboard to help ensure that appetite for risk is clear, risk is managed and any early warning signs are addressed.	ARC FRC Ops		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk process well embedded and regularly praised by Audit and Risk Committee for its effectiveness. Annual Business Continuity Planning meeting takes place and changes are made to the plan in response. Work ongoing on risk dashboard and assurance map, reviewed by Audit and Risk Committee. Greater visibility of Corporate Risk Register now available to Council. Workshop took place in November 2023.
4. Collate and review our member and service-user feedback on an ongoing basis, against key performance indicators, and work with RCVS Knowledge to employ a quality improvement and innovation methodology to ensure we are providing services that meet the needs of our audiences and society at large.	Ops Head of I&E		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper on 'vital signs' to be discussed at January 2024 meeting of Council. Process for reviewing / analysing all complaints about RCVS, regardless of area of work, still ongoing. Customer Services team now well established and looking to extend its remit. Vet and VN exit survey data now being gathered. Zero tolerance for abuse of our staff statement now on the website. Members' views will be gathered as part of the 2024 Surveys of the Professions.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
5. Put in place a People Strategy that develops our talent, diversity, leadership and culture, across the staff team, Council and committee members, examiners, assessors and all others who work on behalf of the College.	Exec People		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning management system platform under development. • Change of pension provider has been implemented for staff who were members of the current scheme. Review of remaining scheme to take place. • Data dashboard under construction to highlight People data to include diversity and gender information. • Succession planning conversations have helped feed into a leadership framework document. • Career progression framework under review to provide clarity of movement across the organisation. • Update of staff induction, probation and notice processes in progress, majority of the policies are complete with some minor adjustments based on feedback being updated. Induction is now managed monthly, with less requirement of colleagues to support; more enhancements in progress. • Regular training sessions for managers – in the form of clinics – now being rolled out. Rotation arrangements for new managers and emerging managers underway. • Review of payroll and people systems underway, to reduce repetition and administration, provide a better service to managers and improve the experience for new recruits. Likely to be completed by end of year. • Greater support for all colleagues impacted by parental leave rules - by means of detailed guidance, simple language and advice - being developed. • Large volume of external recruitment for committee appointments completed. • Lieu time policy under construction for staff. • Neurodiversity training took place for Senior Team and People Teams in December 2023. Different approach may be required for Council training so new supplier being sought. • Career web page review underway to better promote career opportunities. • Apprentice recruitment underway – first apprentice recruited. • Internal 'engagement hub' (internet) agreed, implementation prior to year-end. • Our first Skills Share Week delivered as a direct result of June away day discussion, feedback very positive with plans to repeat.
6. Ensure our financial systems are customer-focused, fraud-resistant and efficient, and improve communication and clarity over where money is spent and its impact.	FRC Ops		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure database upgrade includes a flexible customer interface. • Fraud policy to be refreshed.

Action	Who?	Status	Recent activity/next steps
7. Develop and implement a technology strategy that puts digital first, is collaborative, and focuses on simplification and convergence.	Exec Digital FRC		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Platforms for NPL, PDR and Stanley (PSS) purchased late spring 2023. • CRM review project with Smart Impact now underway.
8. Purchase a new property that aims to serve the needs of the College for the next twenty years, while not putting an undue future financial commitment on our members.	Estates Ops		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HS now free of tenants. • Levy Real Estate have been appointed to draw up refurbishment requirements and employer's requirements document under development. • All planning applications approved except for flying RCVS flag on RCVS Day. • Technical Group set up and responsible for ensuring building infrastructure, kit and layout meet the current and future needs, within agreed budgets
9. Put in place a communications strategy that will focus on clarifying what we are, and what we are not, and be stronger about calling out those who seek to undermine the College; own our shortcomings and be clear about where and how we will change; and be bolder about celebrating our successes and our unique contribution to animal health and welfare, and public health. Empower our wider team to become communications ambassadors for the College.	Comms		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RCVS comms survey of key stakeholders (including professions, public etc) to establish preferences and gain feedback. • Produce coms plan for next 12 months to support remaining ambitions of current Strategic Plan, departmental activities and stakeholder requirements. • Social media strategy under development as part of broader planning work. • Web content review report received and work underway across key sections of website to update content in line with report's recommendations. • Language/Content Style Guide near completion, to be followed by familiarisation training for staff. • Brand development review ongoing, to be aligned with new building presentation and next Strategic Plan. • Website review ongoing.
10. Develop and implement a corporate social responsibility strategy that befits an organisation that works in the public interest.	FRC Ops		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental impact of new building under consideration, plus how it can help us integrate into, and support, community, eg, working with local schools. • Work ongoing with UK Health Alliance on Climate Change (UKHACC). • Regular reviews of investment portfolio to ensure it aligns with our values. • Push to encourage staff to make more use of volunteering days to support social responsibility of the organisation. • Working towards Investors in the Environment (iE) Silver once in new building (we secured Bronze for another year in 2023). • Consideration of carbon off-setting line in 2025 budget. • Sustainability considered for VN Pre-Registration Examinations. Reduction of single-use items, reuse, repurpose or recycle where possible. • Events strategy – eg around merchandise and give-aways – reflects environmental policy.

Summary	
Meeting	Veterinary Nurses Council
Date	28 February 2024
Title	Veterinary Nurses Council – Governance reform
Summary	This paper builds on VNC discussions at its November meeting. It outlines a number of detailed options for the reform of RCVS governance.
Decisions required	VNC is asked to decide which model of governance reform it prefers to recommend, for approval by RCVS Council following consultation.
Attachments	
Author	Ben Myring Policy & Public Affairs Manager b.myring@rcvs.org.uk

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a

Reform of Veterinary Nurses Council governance

Background

- 2) At its November meeting, Veterinary Nurses Council (VNC) indicated its preferences on a number of key questions related to the reform of its governance. It agreed that:
 - a) There should be a greater use of independent appointment rather than election.
 - b) There should be a move towards closer parity between professional and lay members of VNC.
 - c) Options to reduce the size of VNC should be considered.
- 3) This paper sets out detailed options based on the decisions made above, and asks VNC to decide on which option should form the basis of its reform recommendations. Any recommendations will be consulted on before any final decision is made.
- 4) VNC is formally a committee of the RCVS, and therefore with the approval of RCVS Council reform of its governance is possible without recourse to legislation. Measures to amend VNC governance could be implemented as early as 2025.

RCVS Council governance reform

- 5) At its January meeting, RCVS Council agreed to consult on reform models, which include:
 - a) Parity, or near parity of veterinary professionals and lay members.
 - b) Replacing all elected members with appointed members.
 - c) Removing the VSC appointees, while ensuring there is a strong educationalist vice on the appropriate committees.
 - d) Increasing the proportion of allied professionals as and when the RCVS comes to regulate them.
- 6) RCVS Council is not planning to consult on reform that would involve a mix of elected and appointed members. It would therefore arguably be inappropriate for RCVS Council to continue to have veterinary nurse members who were originally elected to VNC. The reform models proposed below therefore do not include an elected element.
- 7) The decisions at the end of the paper are laid out in such a way that by answering them VNC will choose a single model for its reform recommendation.

Size of VNC

- 8) The options laid out in the table on page 4 are organised based on different potential council sizes, showing the impact that a reduction in members might have on composition. Regulatory boards usually consist of 10-12 members, with the most recent model (for social workers) having only six members. VNC will need to decide if and to what extent the size of VNC body should be reduced.

Lay parity

- 9) Most options in the table feature lay parity, which is considered to be best practice for regulatory bodies. Options 3, 6, and 9 retain a small professional majority. VNC will need to determine whether it wishes to introduce full lay parity.

Number of veterinary surgeons on VNC

- 10) There are currently two veterinary surgeons on VNC, along with an observer member from the Officer Team. If the composition of VNC is changed to allow for greater lay membership, and especially if the size of Council is reduced, there is an argument to reduce the number of veterinary surgeons on VNC in order to maximise the number of veterinary nurse members. Many of the models in the table therefore feature only one veterinary surgeon member on VNC.

Possible governance models

			Professional members		Lay members	Total
			VN	RCVS Council appointed vet	Lay member	
14 Members		VNC status quo	8	2	4	14
	Option 1	Lay parity	5	2	7	14
	Option 2	Lay parity with fewer veterinary surgeons	6	1	7	14
	Option 3	Professional majority	6	2	6	14
12 Members	Option 4	Lay parity	4	2	6	12
	Option 5	Lay parity with fewer veterinary surgeons	5	1	6	12
	Option 6	Professional majority	6	1	5	12
10 Members	Option 7	Lay parity	3	2	5	10
	Option 8	Lay parity with fewer veterinary surgeons	4	1	5	10
	Option 9	Professional majority	5	1	4	10

Decisions

11) VNC is asked to decide whether the composition of VNC should be reformed, and if so to indicate which model it prefers to recommend to RCVS Council. This can be determined by voting on the following questions:

- a)** VNC is asked to decide whether to retain a 14-member Council.
- b)** If no, then VNC is asked to choose between a 10 or 12-member Council.
- c)** VNC is asked to decide whether to introduce lay parity.
- d)** VNC is asked whether to recommend reducing the number of veterinary surgeons on VNC from two to one (plus one RCVS Council observer).

Summary	
Meeting	Veterinary Nurses Council
Date	28 February 2024
Title	Minutes of meeting of VN Education Committee held on 11 December 2023
Summary	Minutes of the meeting of Veterinary Nurse Education Committee held on 11 December 2023
Decisions required	To approve
Attachments	Classified appendix
Author	Annette Amato Committee Secretary a.amato@rcvs.org.uk / 020 7202 0713

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a
Appendix	Confidential	2,3,4

¹Classifications explained

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation or publication.
Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.

²Classification rationales

Confidential	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To allow the Committee or Council to come to a view itself, before presenting to and/or consulting with others 2. To maintain the confidence of another organisation 3. To protect commercially sensitive information 4. To maintain public confidence in and/or uphold the reputation of the veterinary professions and/or the RCVS
Private	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. To protect information which may contain personal data, special category data, and/or criminal offence data, as listed under the General Data Protection Regulation

Veterinary Nurse Education Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2023 held remotely via Teams

Members:

	Mrs Sarah Batt-Williams	HE veterinary nursing provider
*	Miss Julia Cox	Employer representative
*	Ms Sarah Fox	VN Council lay member
	Mrs Sarah Holman	FE veterinary nursing provider
	Mrs Susan Howarth	VN Council veterinary nurse (Chair)
	Miss Sophia Hoyland	HE student representative
	Miss Betsy Malamah-Thomas	Employer representative
*	Mrs Sarah Parkhouse	FE veterinary nursing provider
	Mrs Sarah Reynolds-Golding	HE independent regulatory expert
	Mrs Perdi Welsh	Post-registration veterinary nurse provider
*	Miss Leigh Willson	FE student representative

*absent

In attendance:

	Mrs Annette Amato	Committee Secretary
	Mrs Jasmine Curtis	Qualifications Assessor
	Mrs Julie Dugmore	Director of Veterinary Nursing (DoVN)
	Miss Shirley Gibbins	Qualifications Lead (QL)
	Miss Abigayle Gomez	Senior Qualifications Officer
	Mr Matthew Hall	Qualifications Assessor
	Mrs Victoria Hedges	VN Examinations Quality Lead (VNEQL)
	Miss Lisa Hilton	Examinations Assessor
	Miss Tori Thornton	Qualifications Assessor
	Mrs Kirsty Williams	Education Quality Improvement Manager (EQIM)

Apologies for absence

1. Apologies for absence were received from Julia Cox, Sarah Fox, Sarah Parkhouse and Leigh Willson.

Declarations of interest

2. Sarah Holman declared an interest in relation to the item on Central Qualifications audit monitoring. There were no other declarations of interest relevant to items for decision on the agenda.

Minutes of the meeting of the Education Committee (VNEC) 13 October 2023

3. The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2023 as a correct record. The minutes had been ratified by VN Council at its meeting in November.

Matters arising

4. There were no matters arising from the previous minutes other than those which were covered throughout the agenda.

Veterinary Nursing update

5. The Director of Veterinary Nursing (DoVN) provided an update on recent activities and issues of note:
6. **The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)** had granted re-accreditation to the RCVS, for a further period of five years, following the accreditation visit in June 2023. The decision had been ratified by the ENQA Board at its October meeting and notified to the RCVS in November. The DoVN thanked those committee members who had participated in the accreditation event.
7. **RCVS Academy.** Following the launch of the Academy's Nurse Return course at the end of September, the VN team was working with the Comms team to develop some marketing around the course, and working out how to reach out to those veterinary nurses who needed to know about the course, particularly those who would be required to undertake a period of supervised practice, for whom the course would be compulsory. At present it was only possible to contact those veterinary nurses who were already on the Register. The Academy was also developing a mentor course, to support both the nurse returners and the newly registered (starting out) veterinary nurses.
8. The Academy was also planning a course to assist student veterinary nurses in better understanding of regulation and registration. Currently the DoVN and a member of the Professional Conduct team attend a number of institutions, when requested, to talk about regulation, its importance and the Register as well as the disciplinary and concerns process and CPD. However, it was not feasible to visit all delivery sites (there are now over eighty). The academy was therefore looking to produce resources which colleges could tap into at the appropriate point in their course provision. This would be piloted with tutors and students from colleges.
9. The Chair commented that this would be a very positive development, and felt that the repository of information, rather than a one-off live session, would be very beneficial.
10. **Educator forums.** The Educator Forums which had been planned for the Autumn had had to be rescheduled for staffing reasons. These would be likely to take place in Spring 2024, and additional agenda items would be included. Details would be made available as soon as possible.

11. **Accreditation Standards.** VN Council had agreed at its November meeting to the establishment of a small working group to review the Standards, which had previously been reviewed in 2019 and brought into effect in 2020. Under the policies and procedures, these were due to be reviewed for implementation in Autumn 2024. The group would be chaired by VN Council member Simon Williams, supported by the VNEC Chair, and would include a lay member from VN Council. The group would also include the two independent educators from VNEC, to ensure that the standards were aligned with the requirements of the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual), the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) and the Office for Students (OfS). The DoVN was currently in the process of recruiting a replacement FE independent regulatory expert for VNEC, as the previous member had recently stood down.
12. **Apprenticeships.** The RCVS had recently been informed about a potential change being made by the Welsh Assembly to their apprenticeship funding, with possible cuts due to loss of European funding. If these cuts were to take place, it may impact some of the funding for veterinary nurse provision in Wales, delivered by private providers. Representations to the Welsh Assembly were currently being made by the RCVS through its Policy and Public Affairs department, and the Committee would be kept updated.
13. **Student enrolments and registrations.** Since 1 August 2023, 1,141 students had enrolled, with a further 294 pending, mostly due to errors in the submitted documentation. No applications for veterinary nurse registration had been received since the previous meeting, from students requiring special consideration in respect of the completion of the required 1,800 clinical training hours due to the effect of the Covid pandemic. However, the process would be kept in place and under review until 2025, to allow for any students who may have been adversely affected during the pandemic to apply for consideration.
14. **Veterinary Nurses Day.** A successful Veterinary Nurses Day had been held at the Cutlers Hall in Sheffield on 6 December 2023, with excellent speakers and a beautiful venue. This had been very well attended despite train strikes. Eighty-nine newly registered nurses had attended to make their professional declaration, and two recipients of the Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing. It was likely that two Veterinary Nurses Days would be held in 2024.
15. **Accreditation support.** There had been no support meetings held since the previous meeting of the Committee, for staffing reasons. The meetings had been re-scheduled and would take place early in the new year.
16. **British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) Congress.** The DoVN and Head of Legal Services (Standards) would be attending the BSAVA Congress in March, participating in a panel session on the past, present and future for RVNs. This would cover the Veterinary Surgeons Act and Schedule 3, an update to the Under Care guidance, and future opportunities including Enhanced and Advanced Practitioner and Nurse Prescriber roles.

Matters for decision

Licence to practise qualifications

Accreditations and Re-accreditations

17. The Committee reviewed and discussed reports and action plans and took the following decisions:

University of South Wales

18. Full accreditation for five years for the University of South Wales FdSc in Veterinary Nursing.

Aberystwyth University

19. Provisional accreditation for the Aberystwyth University FdSc Veterinary Nursing.

Changes to Accreditation Status

Lantra Awards

20. Change of status from Provisional accreditation to Full accreditation for the following programmes:
- Lantra Awards Level 3 Work Based Diploma in Veterinary Nursing - Small Animal
 - Lantra Awards Level 3 Work Based Diploma in Veterinary Nursing - Equine

Matters for note

Licence to practise qualifications

Action plan monitoring accreditation/re-accreditation

21. Full oral updates were provided on the action plan monitoring for the following, and clarification was provided on points raised by the Committee:
- Coventry University
 - Harper Adams University
 - Nottingham Trent University
 - University Centre Askham Bryan
 - University of Bristol
 - University of Glasgow
 - University of Greenwich / Plumpton College
 - Central Qualifications

Quality monitoring activities

22. The Committee was provided with papers setting out full updates on quality monitoring activities for the following Accredited Education Institutions (AEIs):

- Central Qualifications
- University of Plymouth (Duchy College)
- Writtle University College

Action plan quality monitoring

23. Oral updates were provided on the monitoring of action plans and future planned actions for the following AElS and centres:
- Anglia Ruskin University (College of West Anglia)
 - Northumberland College
 - Wrexham University

VN Pre-registration examination

Pre-registration Examination Board

24. The VN Examinations Quality Lead presented the minutes of the Pre-registration Examination Board held on 23 November 2023, to consider the results of the OSCEs held on 4-5 November 2023. Of the 43 candidates who had taken the examination, eleven candidates were UK trained students and thirty-two were educated outside the UK. Twenty-nine candidates passed and fourteen failed.
25. In response to a query, it was noted that it was difficult to make comparisons in the pass rates from one sitting to the next, due to the small number of candidates involved and the difference in candidate demographic (such as the content of veterinary nurse education in different countries). Analysis of the data takes place to determine the reliability of the examinations as a whole. The examinations team monitor results country by country although these are less meaningful due to the small numbers involved.

Pre-registration knowledge examination

26. It was reported that following the agreement to use TestReach to deliver the pre-registration knowledge examination, the contract had now been signed and the examinations team were attending training on how to use the portal. The first examinations would be delivered in March 2024. The examinations would have live online invigilation.

Items for publication

27. There were no specific items for publication arising from the meeting.

Any other business

28. **The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) Subject Benchmark Statements.** The Chair reported that a meeting had been held in early December to review the feedback and amendments for the revised Subject Benchmark Statements, with one further meeting planned for early 2024. Publication of the benchmark statements was likely to take place in April.

Date of next meeting

Meeting dates 2024

29. The meeting dates were confirmed as follows:
- Wednesday 14 February
 - Tuesday 16 April
 - Thursday 20 June (in person, full day meeting)
 - Wednesday 14 August
 - Tuesday 15 October
 - Thursday 12 December

Remote meetings would start at 9.30am.

Summary	
Meeting	Veterinary Nurses Council
Date	28 February 2024
Title	RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee Report to VN Council
Summary	This report sets out the work of the Registered Veterinary Nurse (RVN) Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC)
Decisions required	None
Attachments	None
Authors	<p>Sandra Neary Professional Conduct Officer / Secretary to the RVN PIC s.neary@rcvs.org.uk / 020 7202 0730</p> <p>Gemma Crossley Head of Professional Conduct g.crossley@rcvs.org.uk / 020 7202 0740</p>

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a

¹Classifications explained

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation or publication.
Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.

²Classification rationales

Confidential	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To allow the Committee or Council to come to a view itself, before presenting to and/or consulting with others 2. To maintain the confidence of another organisation 3. To protect commercially sensitive information 4. To maintain public confidence in and/or uphold the reputation of the veterinary professions and/or the RCVS
Private	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. To protect information which may contain personal data, special category data, and/or criminal offence data, as listed under the General Data Protection Regulation

Registered Veterinary Nurses Preliminary Investigation Committee

Report to VN Council

Introduction

1. Since the last Report to Veterinary Nurses Council, there have been three meetings of the RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee which took place on 31 October 2023, 12 December 2023, and 23 January 2024. The next meeting is scheduled to take place on 5 March 2024.

RVN Concerns received / registered.

2. Between 24 October 2023 and 9 February 2024, there were 16 new concerns relating to RVNs. Of these 16 new concerns:

- Ten are currently under investigation by a Case Manager, Veterinary Nurse, Veterinary surgeon, and a lay member (Stage 1 PIC).
- Two cases closed at Stage 1.
- Three cases have been referred to Stage 2 PIC.
- One case closed at Stage 2 PIC.

RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee

3. There have been six new cases considered by the RVN PIC between 24 October 2023 and 9 February 2024. One case was closed. Four cases were referred to external solicitors for formal statements to be taken from relevant witnesses. One case was referred to the RVN Disciplinary Committee.
4. At the meeting on 31 October 2023, the Committee considered an ongoing case which it referred to the RVN Disciplinary Committee.

Ongoing Investigations

5. Five concerns are currently under investigation, and these will be returned to the RVN PIC for a decision in due course.

Health Concerns

6. There are currently no RVNs being managed in the context of the RCVS Health Protocol.

Performance Concerns

7. There are currently no RVNs being managed in the context of the RCVS Performance Protocol.

Referral to Disciplinary Committee

8. Since the last report, two cases have been referred to the RVN Disciplinary Committee. The first case has been listed to take place between 19 and 26 February 2024 (excluding 21 February) and the second case has been listed to take place on 26 and 27 March 2024.

Disciplinary Hearings

9. Since the last report, a Disciplinary hearing took place on 6 and 7 November 2023. The Disciplinary Committee found serious professional misconduct proved and issued a reprimand to the Respondent. A Disciplinary hearing was due to commence on 7 February 2024 but has been postponed to a future date due to the unavailability of a DC member.

Summary	
Meeting	Veterinary Nurses Council
Date	28 February 2024
Title	VN Register Report
Summary	<p>This paper provides the following statistics:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The number of registered veterinary nurses as at 1 February 2024. Figures for the previous five years are also included. Number of removals from the register due to non-payment of annual fee. New registrations for the calendar years 2018- 2023 including the qualification route of the new registrants. New student enrolments per academic year. Number of veterinary nurses commencing a Period of Supervised Practice (PSP).
Decisions required	None
Attachments	None
Author	<p>Annette Amato</p> <p>Secretary to Veterinary Nurses Council</p> <p>020 7202 0713</p> <p>a.amato@rcvs.org.uk</p>

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a

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Veterinary Nurses Register

Number of registered VNs

	24/01/2019	04/02/2020	03/02/2021	01/02/2022	01/02/2023	01/02/2024
Number of Registered Veterinary Nurses	16,864	18,246	18,882	20,916	22,010	23,267
Number of Nurses removed for non-payment of annual fee (annually – usually carried out in January)	450 <i>(124 restored to register by 24/01/2019)</i>	409 <i>(84 restored to register by 04/02/2020)</i>	314 <i>(24 restored to register by 04/02/2021)</i>	316 <i>(Removals carried out in February 2022) 54 nurses restored within one month of being removed</i>	307 <i>(62 of those removed for non-payment restored to register by 31/01/2023)</i>	426 <i>(109 of those removed for non-payment restored to register by 15/02/2024)</i>

Number of admissions to the register (new registrants for the calendar year)

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
UK Further Education qualification	1197	1081	483	1727	1058	1045
UK Higher Education qualification	406	503	445	478	568	558
Overseas qualification	78	62	41	39	68	81
Total new registrations	1681	1646	969	2244	1694	1684

Student enrolments for each academic year (from 1 July to 30 June)

Student Enrolments	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023
	1990	2109	1860	1910	2339	2320

Period of Supervised Practice (PSP)

Number of nurses commencing a Period of Supervised Practice

Period of Supervised Practice commenced	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
	40	34	21	33	43	36