

RCVS REVIEW

THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SURGEONS: PART 1

2012



Raising
standards

RCVS REVIEW 2012

1 April 2011 – 31 March 2012

Patron: Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II



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Registration

Language testing, minimum training standards, alert mechanisms... it's all being discussed in Europe, and will have an impact on the UK soon, says past-President and EU veterinary political stalwart, Stephen Ware.

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Professional Conduct

New *Codes of Professional Conduct* for veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses were introduced this year, shaped by the input of both the profession and the public, as PDSA Head of Clinical Services, Steven Howard, outlines.

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Fit for the future

It would be wrong to say that this has not been a 'challenging' year for the College. It is right and proper that Council, representative organisations and individual veterinary surgeons should be able to challenge the decisions and actions of the governing body. The year has seen great change, with changes in leadership of the executive body and plans in place for a new Audit and Risk Committee, to name but a few. Some of these changes were the result of normal evolution; some the result of fresh initiatives; others in response to challenges.



Unfortunately, when the eye is focused on major change and the reasons for it, more routine achievements can be overlooked. I am, therefore, pleased to report that despite these challenges and changes, the College has continued to deliver in a number of key areas. *New Codes of Professional Conduct* for the veterinary and veterinary nursing professions have been published; a new online continuing professional development recording system has been launched; and the major groundwork has been laid for a Legislative Reform Order (LRO) to modernise the delivery of our professional conduct system, which will bring it closer to a fitness to practise arrangement.

"I feel privileged to have witnessed the development of a new profession throughout very nearly all of its history."

I was especially proud to be President of the College as the veterinary nursing profession reached its 50th anniversary. This culminated in a very successful event in the House of Commons and a number of other commemorative activities. I first encountered veterinary nurses (then RANAs) as a schoolboy seeing practice in the mid-60s. I feel privileged to have witnessed the development of a new profession throughout very nearly all of its history. As the sophistication of nursing has advanced, I am confident that veterinary nurses have not lost sight of the fact that their *raison d'être* is the care and welfare of the patient, to ensure a rapid and successful recovery. This has been the subject of recent debate in human medicine, where, sadly, there can often

be a disconnect between the delivery of the hi-tech end of medicine, and the fundamental care and dignity of the patient.

I am not the first, and I am sure I will not be the last, President to mention that the highlight of the year was the admission ceremonies for new veterinary graduates. Friday, 22 July 2011 saw the first graduating cohort from a new veterinary school for 50 years become veterinary surgeons. To be part of that ceremony, especially as former students and colleagues of mine now populate the faculty of the University of Nottingham's School of Veterinary Medicine and Science, was extremely touching.

I would like to welcome the new CEO Nick Stace to his post. I am sure he will enjoy working with our profession, despite our sometimes idiosyncratic ways! I would also like to take the opportunity of thanking Gordon Hockey for stepping in as Acting Registrar at short notice, and maintaining good-humoured stability in the interim. It was not an easy baton to hold and I would like to record the unsolicited commendations from the profession and beyond, recognising his achievement.

I am sure the incoming President Jacqui Molyneux's energy and enthusiasm will carry forward a refreshed RCVS, able to take a strategic view of the needs of the animal-owning public and the profession for the coming years.

Jerry Davies
President

Raising standards

As you can see from the cover, this year our theme is raising standards. Not only do we set standards for the profession, but we regularly review them, ensuring that they keep pace with the modern regulatory environment and the expectations of the public and animal owners: this sometimes means raising the bar. It is hoped that this helps to maintain the public's trust, and it was heartening to hear at recent animal-owner focus groups that the profession continues to be held in high regard.

“Setting and raising standards of UK veterinary education is the rationale behind our vet school visitation programme.”

Of course there is also the sense in which a 'standard' is a flag, and although this year has been a tough one for the College in some respects, it's important that we continue to wave the flag for our positive achievements, many of which are outlined in this *Review*.

Within this document, you can read the views of Steven Howard, PDSA Head of Clinical Services, on the consultation process for the development of the new *Codes of Professional Conduct*. The development of the new standards within the *Codes* was a long process, and we are grateful to all those who took part.

When setting standards for the profession in the UK, we are often working within a European context. Currently, Europe is considering minimum training requirements for the profession, and these standards are considered by RCVS past-President and former Federation of Veterinarians of Europe Board member, Stephen Ware.

Still on a European theme, the *Review* also highlights the support that the RCVS Charitable Trust gave to Italian graduate Livia Benato in completing her residency, and Dr Anne Torgersen offers an overview of current European veterinary nursing projects, where the work of the UK often sets the standard to be adopted on the continent.

Setting and raising standards of UK veterinary education is the rationale behind our vet school visitation programme, and Harriet Baxter, a student at the University of Bristol, outlines the positive impact this process had on her student experience.

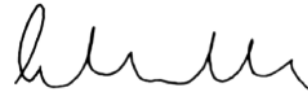
Last, but by no means least, Sir Roger Gale, MP for North Thanet, helped us to celebrate 50 years of veterinary nurse training last year, by hosting a reception in the House of Commons. He highlights the importance of all those who use the title 'veterinary nurse' being educated and trained to a high standard, and that the title should be protected by statute, for the benefit of owners and their animals.

I mentioned at the outset that this has been a somewhat difficult year for the College, and it is right that we have also looked at our own standards, as part of the Overspend Review Group's Report, and raised the bar for ourselves. We are setting up an Audit and Risk Committee; the role of the Registrar has been reviewed; a new Chief Executive and Secretary has now been appointed; and, we have put in place new protocols for project management.

I would like to pay tribute to the hard work and dedication of Jane Hern, who left the post of Registrar and Secretary in November 2011, a role which she had held for 15 years.

I would also like to thank all of my colleagues and Council members for

their support during recent months. Leading the executive of the College during this interim period has been an interesting and rewarding challenge, and I wish the new Chief Executive well.



Gordon Hockey
Acting Registrar



European perspective

European politics may seem to be dominated by economics, but, as former Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) Board member and past RCVS President, Stephen Ware MRCVS, explains, the ongoing review of the Recognition of Professional Qualifications Directive may have a greater impact on the UK veterinary profession.

I have been involved in European veterinary politics for many years, spending four years on the Board of the FVE, until 2011, and chairing its Statutory Bodies Working Group for the last two years.

Exposure to the FVE makes you realise that not only is the UK just one of 27 EU member states, but that the veterinary profession is, in policy terms, just one of many. For example, the Recognition of Professional Qualifications Directive (RPQD) has to be fit for purpose, not only for the veterinary and other 'liberal' professions, such as doctors, dentists and architects, but also for ski instructors and palm readers – 800 professions in total.

The RPQD establishes rules for the recognition of a professional qualification and, together with the Services Directive, impacts on issues surrounding the free movement of professionals within Europe and on rights to work in a host member state. It's an important issue, considering that about a third of new RCVS registrants each year are from the EU.

Not all of the provisions are common to all of the professions. For example, language testing for the healthcare professions will be much more stringent, to ensure professionals are able to communicate effectively, to prescribe and supply

medicines safely and to have a complete understanding of the relevant language in the host country. The EU does not consider the veterinary profession to be in the same category as healthcare professionals, so we have been lobbying hard at the Commission and the European Parliament for similar consideration. The FVE contends that the veterinary profession has an equal impact on public health, in terms of food hygiene, the environment, responsible use of medicines and zoonotic diseases, and that the public, therefore, needs similar protection.

Minimum training requirements fall within the RPQD. The UK has a well-respected track-record in the field of veterinary education, from vet school visitations to, most recently, day-one competences. Pan-European vet school visitations are voluntary but the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE) and the FVE have evolved the scheme to include two levels: approval and accreditation. This adds a significant measure of confidence for regulators, and gives added information to employers of EU graduates.

In future, the Commission may be able to modify the minimum training requirements under delegated powers. This is fine in principle, but there are concerns about the extent to which the Commission will be required to consult

beforehand. We would like to ensure that the FVE is included in the process, but this is by no means a foregone conclusion.

An online process, the Internal Market Information (IMI) system, allows competent authorities such as the RCVS to liaise with their counterparts in other member states to identify whether someone applying for registration has a clean professional slate. However, although it works well for the Services Directive, use by member states in respect of the current RPQD is limited. A new Regulation will require member states to use the IMI system. At the same time, the RPQD makes provision for the health and veterinary professions to issue a general alert in the face of criminal conviction or disciplinary action leading to a loss of licence to practise.

The review of the RPQD is expected to complete in late 2012 or 2013, and there is still work to be done to ensure the veterinary voice is heard. But it won't stop there. The FVE is constantly addressing issues within the One Health concept, such as a new Animal Health Law and issues surrounding antimicrobial resistance and the supply of medicines. Enough to keep the FVE and others busy for a long time.

For more information about the FVE's activities, visit www.fve.org

“The UK has a well-respected track-record in the field of veterinary education, from vet school visitations to, most recently, day-one competences.”



Other registration-related activities include:

- Processing applications for registration in various categories for the 2012 Olympics
- Continuing to process an increasing number of registrations, many of which have become more complicated due to changes in the procedure for some of the more recent EU countries
- Continuing work with the Veterinary Medicines Directorate regarding the management of the Register of Veterinary Practice Premises
- Processing 48 new Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) applications, covering 59 premises. There are 2,603 premises under the ambit of the Scheme
- Ongoing training for the PSS Inspectors, to ensure a standardised approach
- Carrying out an animal-owner advertising campaign for the Practice Standards Scheme, and producing promotional bookmarks to raise awareness with the public.



Setting the Code

This year, we launched the new *Codes of Professional Conduct* for veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses. Their development was informed by two consultations, the responses from which proved immensely valuable. PDSA Head of Clinical Services, Steven Howard MRCVS, explains how his organisation contributed to the process.

PDSA employs around 290 veterinary surgeons and over 650 nursing team staff, including over 300 registered veterinary nurses. We are one of the UK's largest single employers of veterinary professionals, so I feel it is important for PDSA to respond to all relevant consultations, whether they are from the RCVS, or other bodies, such as the Veterinary Medicines Directorate or Defra.

When I first heard the *Guide to Professional Conduct* was being reviewed I was a little apprehensive, as, over the years, we have all become familiar with it. However, I was increasingly aware that the *Guide* had become cumbersome, and, with the various appendices and advice notes, it sometimes took a bit of cross-referencing to fully understand an issue, so I recognised that simplification would be a good thing.

When I saw the first draft, I was pleased with the new approach – the new *Code* follows a principles-based structure, which clarifies what *must* be done, together with supporting guidance, which outlines what *should* be done. At the time, however, I felt the new *Code* would stand or fall on the quality of this supporting guidance, which was not included in the draft. Now I have seen the guidance, I feel reassured.

PDSA submitted a detailed response to the consultation and we were broadly supportive

of the contents of the draft – I would like to think we were critical but constructive.

I have been pleased to find that a number of our suggestions have been acted upon in the final version. For example, in the section 'Veterinary surgeons and animals,' the original clause covering clinical governance went into detail in some areas, but was not comprehensive. We thought these gaps in detail might be misleading. In the end, the provision was simplified to "Veterinary surgeons must ensure that clinical governance forms part of their professional activities" and broader detail was included in the supporting guidance, which I think is more helpful.

We also responded to the consultation on the veterinary nurse *Code*, raising similar points – it's important that there is consistency between the two. As registered veterinary nurses have had the *Guide* in place for a shorter time than the vets, I hope that they will find adapting to changes in structure and content of the new *Code* less of a challenge.

Both *Codes* include some new aspects, such as the Performance Protocol. This incorporates the concept of whistle-blowing on colleagues who consistently under-perform, but only as a last resort, when other options have been exhausted.

PDSA already has documented processes and procedures in place to consider performance and clinical governance, amongst others; these were largely based on the old *Guide*, annexes and advice notes, so our main task now is ensuring that they are amended to incorporate the new wording and aspects covered in RCVS guidance. It's very important that we have standard interpretations across the organisation, so that any vet or nurse working in any of our PetAid hospitals knows the expectations of both the RCVS and PDSA, which should be aligned and not open to mis-interpretation.

The limited number of people who are reported to respond to RCVS consultations is disappointing. I think it is incumbent upon all members to respond where we can, and ensure we take the opportunity to influence College policy where it's appropriate. After all, we are shaping the framework within which we all operate.

For its part, I feel the College could improve the level of feedback that it gives to those who have taken the time to respond, and that this would probably encourage future response rates.

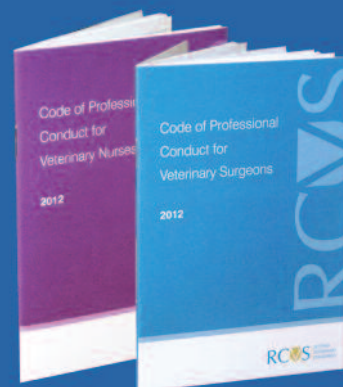
Read the new *Codes* at www.rcvs.org.uk/vetcode and www.rcvs.org.uk/vncode

“I would like to think we were critical but constructive.”



Other complaints- and guidance-related activities include:

- Carrying out 75 visits to veterinary practices, including five which related to health cases under the new Health Protocol, and 12 which related to review cases
- Solicitors investigating complaints taking 146 formal witness statements
- 36 hearing days by the Disciplinary Committee, hearing cases and applications for restoration
- Undertaking 55 reviews for complainants unhappy with the RCVS decision to close their complaint
- Handling 747 complaints and 1,796 requests for advice
- Introducing a complaints and disciplinary system for registered veterinary nurses, effective 1 April 2011
- Introducing a Performance Protocol to complete our fitness to practise procedures
- Producing new *Codes of Professional Conduct* for veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses, including 27 chapters of supporting guidance.



Opening doors

The RCVS Charitable Trust supported veterinary surgeon Livia Benato MRCVS through her residency in Rabbit and Exotic Animal Medicine at the University of Edinburgh, which she completed in September 2011. Here, she explains what the funding, and the residency, has meant for her.

Behind my garden wall is Chester Zoo; I am often woken in the morning by the sound of lions and gibbons. It's an idyllic setting – and a pretty good commute, too. But I wouldn't be living here, or working at Chester Zoo, if it wasn't for the financial support of the RCVS Charitable Trust throughout my residency.

Graduating from the University of Parma in 2002, my first clinical role was in an exotic animal referral practice in Milan, and this is where my interest in exotics truly began. However, there are not many opportunities for exotics vets in Italy, so, in 2004, I decided to come to the UK to develop further my skills. I spent a happy four years working, first, in a small animal practice as a part-time vet, and then at an emergency and critical care service provider in Lincolnshire, as a senior vet. The shifts of these jobs allowed me to spend my free time seeing practice at Bristol Zoo, and then work as a locum veterinary officer at a wildlife hospital in King's Lynn.

During this time, I became particularly interested in rabbit health and welfare. Although rabbits are becoming increasingly common pets in the UK, knowledge about the species is lagging behind, particularly in terms of preventive care. The interest became personal, too, as I took on a rescue rabbit known as Speedy (pictured), because of the difficulties we had catching her

in the supermarket car park where she had been dumped!

It was therefore a great opportunity to go to Edinburgh for the residency in Rabbit and Exotic Animal Medicine, which I started in 2008. The Trust funding was secured by my supervisor Anna Meredith before I arrived, and I am very grateful to her not only for that, but also for the support and advice she gave me throughout my residency. During that three-year period, I encountered everything from indigenous wildlife, such as foxes and eagles, through pet animals, such as rabbits and tortoises, to lemurs and wallabies, at the local zoological park. I also completed my RCVS Certificate in Zoological Medicine.

A residency has to be considered as an investment in your future: the hours are terrible and the salary very small, but the opportunities it opens to you are immense! I particularly discovered an interest in research, which surprised me, as it was not something I had considered before. This new-found enthusiasm led me to study for an MSc, with my thesis looking at probiotics and gut flora in rabbits. I certainly wouldn't have been able to work towards my masters, which I hope to finish later this year, without the Trust's funding.

During my residency, I was also asked to teach Edinburgh's veterinary undergraduates about

rabbit welfare, medicine and surgery. Teaching is something I approached warily, but I came to really enjoy. I continue to teach undergraduates rabbit husbandry and nutrition at Glasgow's Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, as Guest Lecturer.

On completing my residency, I was lucky enough to take up the position of Veterinary Officer at Chester Zoo, which I love. I have well and truly got the studying bug now, though, and am contemplating the RCVS Diploma in Zoological Medicine next, and also seeking funding for a PhD.

Although it can be hard work, I would definitely recommend a residency. It sparked my interest in research and teaching, helped me make all sorts of interesting and useful contacts, enabled me to work with some fantastic people, and allowed me to travel to conferences and meetings I would otherwise have been unable to access. I am very grateful to the Trust for opening these doors for me.

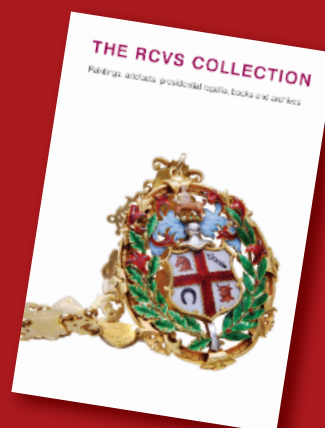
Sign up to our Twitter account @RCVSTrust

“A residency has to be considered as an investment in your future.”



Other Trust-related activities include:

- Awarding 13 grants, to a value of £56,895, for Blue Sky Research, Travel Scholarships and Extra-Mural Studies awards, among others
- Jointly sponsoring the Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons' Final-Year Seminar
- Jointly funding the Vet Helpline
- Collaborating with the Centre for Rural Economy, Newcastle University and the British Library, to collect oral testimonies under the theme 'Capturing Life in Practice from the 20th to 21st century'
- Collaborating with Imperial College and the Arts and Humanities Research Council to support 'Pioneers and Professionals', a research project into feminisation of the profession
- Welcoming 92 new Library members, loaning 604 books and 1,041 journals, and supplying over 350 subject alerts
- Setting up a LinkedIn profile for grant-holders
- Creating a Library blog to look at the Historical Collection, and a grant-holder blog to showcase specific projects and their progress
- Producing a catalogue outlining key works in the College's Historical Collection.



Protecting animals and their owners

The veterinary nursing profession celebrated its first half-century in 2011, yet the title ‘veterinary nurse’ remains unprotected. Sir Roger Gale, MP for North Thanet, explains why this is not in the best interests of animal health and welfare.

Last year saw veterinary nurses (VNs) celebrate the 50th anniversary of their training programme, and so it is fitting that it was also a year in which they consolidated their activities towards achieving statutory recognition of the profession.

I have a young friend who is training to be a veterinary nurse, a son who is a veterinary surgeon and I'm also an Honorary Member of the British Veterinary Association, so I was delighted when the RCVS asked me to sponsor a reception in the Houses of Parliament to celebrate this milestone. The 50th anniversary reception was a great success and demonstrated just how sympathetic the House is to issues that concern the health and welfare of animals.

I have always found qualified veterinary nurses to be well trained and professional, and to have a real connection with animals and an understanding of their needs.

It simply cannot be right that anyone can, as at present, call themselves a ‘veterinary nurse,’ regardless of their training and expertise. Quite properly, the title ‘veterinary surgeon’ is already protected in statute, and the title of veterinary nurse should follow suit. Both professions deal with sentient beings that do not have the luxury of being able to communicate in our language.

Both professions are also dealing with medicines and public health issues.

The term ‘veterinary nurse’ should be protected by statute so that the public can be guaranteed that only those qualified as VNs can use the title, and any such statute should also, of course, make provision for disciplinary procedures in the event that anyone is found to be guilty of misconduct. If I see a professional, such as a doctor, then I am assured that they are properly qualified and that they ought to know what they are doing. That is equally true of a veterinary surgeon. So why should a veterinary nurse be any different?

It's important, however, that although the VN profession is keen to stand on its own two feet, the need for team-work is not sacrificed. I believe that by focusing on the way in which veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses work together in practice, and by seeking regulation under the same body – the RCVS – veterinary nurses are taking precisely the right approach. VNs and veterinary surgeons have to continue to work in a symbiotic relationship.

I am well known for my dislike of unnecessary bureaucracy, and am, therefore, pleased that VNs are not seeking to set up yet another entirely new and unnecessary body solely for the regulation of their profession.

Moving forward, I would like to see in addition to statutory protection of the title ‘veterinary nurse’, greater recognition of the veterinary nursing profession, a recognition of the importance of veterinary nursing qualifications, greater emphasis on the patient care role of VNs and a robust regulatory regime operated under the umbrella of the RCVS.

It is imperative, however, that VNs do not become seen as quasi-vets. Veterinary nursing is a separate, distinct and honourable vocation. Veterinary nurses work best and most effectively alongside veterinary surgeons who respect their expertise and allow them to bring their own complementary skills to the practice team. It is right that this distinction should be maintained.

I wish veterinary nurses well, not only in meeting their immediate challenges, but in taking their profession forward into their next half-century.

Support the veterinary nursing profession by signing up at <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/18700>

"I have always found qualified veterinary nurses to be well trained and professional, and to have a real connection with animals and an understanding of their needs."



Other communications-related activities include:

- Supporting the VN 50th anniversary with PR, competitions, a seminar, an Early Day Motion and an event at the House of Commons
- Attending congresses and events; hosting three Regional Question Times, two Meet the RCVS Days, student meetings and RCVS Day; and, holding a well-received Stakeholder Open Day for representatives from animal-related organisations
- Posting 118 items of Latest News, together with press releases, features and columns
- Working with Defra on a proposed Legislative Reform Order to vary the composition of our statutory disciplinary committees
- Responding to ten consultations, and maintaining links with parliamentarians via meetings and functions
- Rolling out the new brand, and being 'Highly Commended' in the 'Brand Development' category of the Membership Communication Awards
- Adding 1,127 followers to our Twitter account (@RCVS_UK)
- Celebrating Vet2011, including an Early Day Motion
- Publishing three issues of RCVS News, two RCVS News Extras and three issues of VN Standard, plus, online RCVS e-News and The Practice Standard.



Seeking approval

A key part of our role is ensuring that the UK veterinary schools meet appropriate standards, so that their graduates are fit to register. The University of Bristol's School of Veterinary Science had been at 'conditional approval' status since 2007, but full approval was reconfirmed in March this year, as final-year student Harriet Baxter explains.

I started at Bristol vet school in 2007, and the conditional approval was already in place, so I had never really known anything different: it's probably not something I even became aware of until my second or third year. However, as you get closer to finals, and the prospect of registration with the RCVS, it becomes something you pay more attention to.

Having said that, I have never really been worried that the school would lose its approval status altogether – I am sure the university would never have let that happen. The attitude here has always been a positive one, but that's not to say it hasn't taken a lot of time and effort by the staff, led by our Head of School, Professor Jo Price, to ensure that the facilities and teaching have been brought back up to an excellent standard.

When I look around the site at Langford now, I feel a mixture of pride at what has been achieved over the last few years, and slight envy for the new students who will be able to take full advantage of all of the new facilities.

Some of the main issues that the RCVS identified were with the farm and the teaching facilities. For a while, some students had to be bussed out to Bridgwater College's Cannington agricultural centre – about an hour away – for

large animal work, which was not very convenient. But now we have updated large animal facilities and state-of-the-art small animal and equine operating theatres. I am really proud when I come through the doors – the facilities are amazing, and much easier and more efficient to work in.

There have been other changes, too, which students have generally been less aware of than the physical changes to the site, for example, in the curriculum,

One of the best aspects of the whole process is that the student body has really been listened to. I have been a year rep right the way through my time here, so act as an interface between the faculty and the students. Not only were students brought into discussions with the RCVS as part of the re-visitation process in 2009 and 2011 – where our views were drawn out and listened to more than I had anticipated they would be – but we were also fully involved in the development of the site.

Professor Price asked us for a wish-list of what we would like to see – not only clinical facilities but also more general student facilities, such as a gym – and it's been exciting to see our suggestions and plans being taken forward. Once it's finished, Langford is going to be a

place where vet students want to stay and develop a community, rather than just do their studies and go home again.

Communication has been important throughout the whole process, to ensure that the students were aware of the changes and the direction in which we were moving. The atmosphere has been so positive that it was sometimes a shock when, on extra-mural studies, vets in practice asked us about Bristol being 'closed down'.

“Communication has been important throughout the whole process, to ensure that the students were aware of the changes and the direction in which we were moving.”

I was pleased, but not surprised, when the RCVS reconfirmed our full approval in March. Against expectation, I think it has actually been a very positive experience for the school and the students, and we have come out of it a stronger and more dynamic place. I almost wish I was applying to start again!

Read about our visitation process at
www.rcvs.org.uk/education



Other education-related activities include:

- Developing an online CPD recording system as part of the new Professional Development Record, to be integrated with a new version of the Professional Development Phase (PDP) website and an undergraduate skills record
- Signing up 701 new graduates to the PDP; as at 31 March 2012, 1,613 recent graduates had completed their PDP
- Appointing two new Postgraduate Deans to assist with the monitoring of new graduates' PDP records
- Adding 24 new Specialists to the List of RCVS Recognised Specialists
- Awarding one new Diploma of Fellowship, 11 RCVS Diplomas and 93 RCVS Certificates
- Enrolling 269 new candidates for either the full Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice (CertAVP) or modules towards it; 40 CertAVPs were awarded during the year under review, making a total of 66 since its inception. As at 31 March, there were 1,009 candidates enrolled for one or more modules
- Reviewing the framework and content of the CertAVP, with a view to introducing an amended key skills module and structure in 2012
- Consulting on proposals for the specialisation framework, led by a Working Party chaired by Professor Sir Kenneth Calman.



A problem shared

In 2011, our Veterinary Nursing (VN) Department led a successful bid for Leonardo da Vinci funding to develop the RCVS Nursing Progress Log into Europe – known as the VECTAR project. Veterinary surgeon Dr Anne Torgersen, Director of the Veterinary Nurse Programme at the Norwegian School of Veterinary Science, outlines the importance of such pan-European projects.

I have been involved in veterinary nursing activities in Europe for some time, and currently chair the Accreditation Committee for Veterinary Nurse Education (ACOVENE). One thing is clear: although there is great variety in the way that veterinary nurses are educated and trained across Europe, we all face similar issues. And, as they say, a problem shared is a problem halved, so it's always good to work together on common solutions.

“Although there is great variety in the way that veterinary nurses are educated and trained across Europe, we all face similar issues.”

The first project I became involved with was the Development of an Accreditation System for Veterinary Nurse Trainers in Europe (DASVENT), which established a set of VN day-one competences and a quality assurance framework for VN training bodies; it was from this work that ACOVENE was born.

Here in Norway, veterinary nursing is one of the top five most popular degree courses, and the entry grades required reflect this. But I am aware that in some other European countries

it's a different story, so it's important that, given there is free movement within the EU, employers have some way of being assured of the quality of training and the level of competence of nurses. The ACOVENE standardisation mark helps achieve this.

The Norwegian vet school next became involved with the Pan-European Practical Assessment System (PEPAS) project – another Leonardo da Vinci project, this time led by Groenhorst College in the Netherlands – which aimed to develop a pan-European system of Objective-Structured Clinical Exams (OSCEs). We had not previously used this type of practical exam, but, following the intensive training given by the RCVS team, we adopted it, and are about to embark on our third year. The OSCE experience has been excellent, as it has enabled us to standardise both teaching and examining, and staff have definitely seen the benefits. In fact, the veterinary degree course is about to adopt OSCEs, as pioneered by the veterinary nurses! It was also useful that the training days were held jointly with colleagues in Sweden and Denmark, as this helped to strengthen our working bonds.

Following on from these successes, the latest project, VECTAR (Veterinary European Clinical Training and Assessment Record), has a good pedigree. An online clinical progress log was

something that we had been looking to develop, but did not have the resources for – so building on the UK system was a godsend for us. All of our VN students have to complete 36 weeks of practical placement and they may be scattered far and wide across this large country, so an online system for quality assurance makes perfect sense.

Following the training provided by the RCVS, we started to use the system in February, and have had some good feedback. There are tweaks we would like to make to refine the system, but the principle has been very well received by students and their clinical coaches.

Now that working together across Europe to solve common veterinary nursing issues has been shown to work, I think our next challenge is to collaborate to ensure that veterinary nurses are legally recognised and authorised in every EU country. We have a statutory authorisation system here in Norway, but it needs to be tightened. The situation varies across different countries, but I believe we can work together, and in conjunction with the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe, to give this the political priority it deserves.

**Find out more about VECTAR
at www.vectar.org**



Other VN-related activities include:

- Presenting the first Golden Jubilee Award to Jean Turner, for her exceptional contribution to veterinary nursing
- Introducing a new badge for registered veterinary nurses (RVNs)
- Fully approving graduate qualifications in veterinary nursing at the following universities: Nottingham Trent University College, the University of Brighton (Plumpton College), the University of London (Royal Veterinary College) and the University of Plymouth (Duchy College)
- Provisionally approving Central Qualifications, a new awarding institution for vocational qualifications

And, via RCVS Awards:

- Approving two new VN colleges, and re-approving a college returning to VN education
- Conducting 326 visits to centres and training practices (132 visitor-days)
- Securing European funding for the two-year VECTAR transfer of innovation project, to share the VN student experience log and clinical coach training with European partner organisations. Activities so far have included hosting a launch conference in London; the development of a clinical coach training package; and, piloting the student experience log in five EU schools of veterinary nursing.



RCVS COUNCIL

2 July 2011 – 6 July 2012

RCVS Council comprises 24 elected members, two appointees from each of the seven UK veterinary schools and four persons appointed by the Privy Council, as specified in the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966.

Elected Members	Attendance	Appointed Members	Attendance
David Catlow MRCVS	3/3	David Argyle MRCVS (E)	2/2
Christopher Chesney FRCVS	3/3	Karen Braithwaite (N)	2/2
Beverley Cottrell MRCVS	3/3	Noreen Burrows (G)	1/2
Sheila Crispin FRCVS	3/3	Ewan Cameron MRCVS (G)	2/3
Jerry Davies MRCVS	3/3	Susan Dawson MRCVS (Lv)	2/3
Mark Elliott MRCVS	3/3	Gary England FRCVS (N)	2/2
Bertie Ellis MRCVS	3/3	Caroline Freedman (E)	3/3
Catherine Goldie MRCVS	3/3	Michael Herrtage MRCVS (C)	2/3
Chris Gray MRCVS	3/3	Andrea Jeffery RVN (B)	3/3
Charles Gruchy MRCVS	3/3	Peter Lees (Ln)	3/3
Lynne Hill MRCVS	3/3	Duncan Maskell (C)	3/3
Peter Jinman MRCVS	3/3	Tim Nuttall MRCVS (Lv)	2/2
Barry Johnson MRCVS	3/3	Joanna Price MRCVS (B)	3/3
Jacqui Molyneux MRCVS	3/3	Stuart Reid MRCVS (Ln)	3/3
Bob Moore MRCVS	3/3	Elaine Watson FRCVS (E)	0/1
Jill Nute MRCVS	3/3		
Bob Partridge MRCVS	3/3	Privy Council Appointed Members	
Christine Shield MRCVS	2/3	Richard Davis	3/3
Neil Smith MRCVS	3/3	Nigel Gibbens MRCVS	2/3
Richard Stephenson MRCVS	3/3	Rachel Jennings	1/3
Clare Tapsfield-Wright MRCVS	3/3	Judith Webb	3/3
Sandy Trees MRCVS	1/2		
Chris Tufnell MRCVS	3/3	Notes: In July 2011, Noreen Burrows replaced Alison Bruce as a University of Glasgow appointee and there were two new appointees from the University of Nottingham. In November 2011, David Argyle replaced Elaine Watson as appointee from the University of Edinburgh. Sandy Trees was a University of Liverpool appointee for the June 2011 meeting, and then an elected member for the November 2011 and March 2012 meetings.	
Bradley Viner MRCVS	3/3		
Note: Universities: B = Bristol, C = Cambridge, E = Edinburgh, G = Glasgow, Lv = Liverpool, Ln = London, N = Nottingham.			

VN COUNCIL

2 July 2011 – 6 July 2012

VN Council comprises eight elected veterinary nurses, six appointed veterinary surgeons (including three from RCVS Council), two lay members and one Lantra representative.

Elected Members	Attendance
Elizabeth Branscombe RVN	3/3
Tanya Caley RVN	2/2
Elizabeth Cox RVN	2/2
Louise Glysen RVN	3/3
Andrea Jeffery RVN	3/3
Katherine Kissick RVN	3/3
Suzanne May RVN	2/3
Hilary Orpet RVN	3/3
Appointed Members	Attendance
Elizabeth Armitage-Chan MRCVS	2/2
Victoria Aspinall MRCVS	2/2
Anthony Birbeck	2/3
Richard Hooker MRCVS	3/3
Christopher House MRCVS (Lantra)	1/3
Jill Nute MRCVS	3/3
Neil Smith MRCVS	2/2
Penelope Swindlehurst	3/3
Bradley Viner MRCVS	2/2

3/3 = attendance at Council meetings during the year under review, ie. 01/04/11 – 31/03/12 (denominator indicates total number of possible meetings for each Council Member).

PERMANENT STAFF

As at 31 March 2012

Annette Amato	Julie Dugmore	Judith Hylton	Marilyn Pablo
Freda Andrews	Libby Earle	Christine James	Nicola Page*
Duncan Ash	Janet Etheridge	Anne Jermey	Vivienne Pankhurst
Emma Baxter	Lesley Evans	Ben Jones	Stephanie Platt
Clare Boulton	Rebecca Fellows	Lo Kei Kwok	Thelma Rees
Gabriella Braun	Richard Foster	Lizzie Lockett	Alison Rengert
Dorothy Brereton	Eleanor Ferguson	Corrie McCann	Anthony Roberts
Paulette Brown	Christine Fraser	Alison McClary	Robert Simpson
Cherry Bushell	Carrie Gage	Laura McClintock	Liz Troman
Mike Byrne	Andrew Grainger	Priya Mehta	Danielle van den Berg
Jamie Cheung	Fiona Harcourt	Alicia Menendez-	Martyn Webster
John Collins	Jenny Harris	Buick	Sue Whall
Helen Cook	Victoria Hedges	Claire Millington	Juliet Whatley
Britta Crawford	Natalie Heppenstall	Christopher Murdoch	Simon Wiklund
Sophie Dicks	Michael Hepper	Ben Myring	Tom Winters
Ashley Doorly	Gordon Hockey	Sandra Neary	
Myai Du	Ian Holloway	Jordan Nicholls	

*on maternity leave

Special thanks to all those who agreed to be featured in this *RCVS Review*, for giving up their time and for their patience; thank you also to those who allowed us to take photographs on their premises.

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