



We unveil a new look

*Welcome to our new
publication for VN training
and education*

In this issue: welcome to *VN Education*, CPD audit, new Education Subcommittee, European update, nominations call, Oxford meeting, exam feedback and myths, new fees, exam dates.

New year, new title... new focus

New publication reflects changing times

Happy New Year and welcome to our new publication – *VN Education* – which replaces *VN Standard*, the newsletter of RCVS Awards. The new title is a VN training publication from the College itself, and covers both vocational and undergraduate training topics.

The change reflects the changing landscape of VN training. This year, two new awarding organisations, City & Guilds and Central Qualifications (CQ), are delivering veterinary nursing vocational qualifications, and are well on the way to full RCVS approval.

As these two organisations become established within veterinary nurse education, we at the RCVS are withdrawing from our awarding body function and are establishing a different relationship with the many colleges now offering these new qualifications.

Regulation focus

Our main function is that of professional regulator, and in this capacity it's our remit to ensure standards and quality of education and training that lead to registration. This means that we maintain an oversight of all registerable qualifications, including the quality of their delivery and assessment.

In order to achieve this, we will maintain a rolling audit programme of all awarding institutions (universities and awarding bodies), which will include the sampling of

programme delivery at colleges. This means the we will periodically visit colleges, and possibly their linked training practices, to ensure that standards of VN education and training are being maintained in accordance with VN Council criteria, and those set by ACOVENE, the European accreditation organisation for VN education.

Colleges will not see the RCVS as frequently as they currently do in relation to RCVS Awards, however, we shall be monitoring all universities and awarding institutions according to risk (annually to begin with) and this will include visits to some of the colleges delivering their qualifications.

Join us to hear more

We'll be holding a liaison meeting for universities and colleges to explain and explore this relationship on **5 March 2013**. If your college is delivering a vocational or undergraduate programme leading to the RCVS VN Register, please ensure that a member of your VN course team can come along. To reserve a place, please contact Helen Cook in the VN Department, on h.cook@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0712.



Education Subcommittee agreed

Increased audit workload requires new structure

A new VN Education Subcommittee will become responsible for overseeing the approval and ongoing quality monitoring of all educational programmes that lead to registration as a veterinary nurse.

The number of such programmes has grown from three in 2000 to 17 in 2012, and the workload in auditing these programmes, and validating new ones, is considerable. The new Subcommittee will comprise six members of the RCVS Veterinary Nurses Council, as well as appointees, to include an independent educationalist and an employer representative.

The Subcommittee will deal with matters on a confidential basis, and general recommendations on approvals or otherwise will be reported to VN Council in public.

The new Subcommittee was agreed at the October meeting of VN Council, where it also agreed to change its own composition, and that of the Registered Veterinary Nurse (RVN) Preliminary Investigation Committee.

The VN Council changes include the addition of a further two lay members, bringing the total to four. At 25% of VN Council, the move will bring lay membership more into line with that of other regulatory committees. Two veterinary places will be dropped to accommodate the change: one of the appointed vets from RCVS Council and one of the non-Council appointed vets.

Changes to the quorum and composition of the RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee were also agreed.

The changes will be put to RCVS Council in March 2013.

Fees: new for 2013

The table below outlines RCVS and RCVS Awards fees effective 1 January 2013.

RCVS regulatory fees 2013		
Registration fees	£	
Enrolment of student veterinary nurses	165	
Temporary enrolment	27	Visiting or exchange students
Enrolment extension	71	For one additional year
Initial registration or re-entry to the Register or List	109	
Annual retention fee	61	
Late payment fee	42	Between 1 November and 31 December
Period of Supervised Practice registration	73	For RVNs returning to the Register after a break of five years or more, valid for one year
Overseas nurse qualification evaluation	130	
Replacement badge	45	
Replacement certificate	40	
DipAVN fees	£	
Initial indexing fee	56	
Annual indexing fee	29	
Certification of modules	45	
Final assessment	151	University-conducted
Final assessment	458	RCVS-conducted

RCVS Awards fees 2013		
Candidate fees	£	
Level 3 MCQ	105	Both papers in one sitting
Transitional pathway MCQ	112	
Level 3 Diploma MCQ	98	Per paper
NVQ OSCE	215	Eight OSCE stations
Diploma OSCE	230	Twelve OSCE stations
Exam enquiry fee	31	
Unit certificate	40	
Centre fees		
Annual fee	601	
EV additional visit per day	374	Including cancellations
Training events		
Training course – initial day	156	
Training course – subsequent days	125	
Full-day IV standardisation event	40	
Half-day IV standardisation event	20	

How do you stand for a seat?

It's not a riddle... but a call for nominations

Nominations to stand for a seat on VN Council close on 31 January 2013. Is this the year you will give it a go?

Those elected will take their seats on RCVS Day in July, to serve a four-year term. VN Council members will be expected to spend at least six to eight days a year attending Council meetings, working parties and subcommittees (for which a loss-of-earnings allowance is available).

A special Meet the RCVS Day will take place on 15 January, to help those considering standing for election to better understand the role of Council, and what will be expected of them if elected. This will give candidates and prospective candidates the opportunity

to meet the College Officers and senior staff, and find out what goes on behind the scenes. Please contact Fiona Harcourt for more information on f.harcourt@rcvs.org.uk.

Each candidate needs to find two proposers; any listed/registered veterinary nurse or veterinary surgeon, except for those presently on the VN or RCVS Councils, may propose one candidate each.

Nomination forms, full instructions and guidance notes are available from www.rcvs.org.uk/vncouncil13.

The VN Council election runs concurrently with the RCVS Council election, where there are six places to be contested (www.rcvs.org.uk/rcvscouncil13).

Setting a European standard

ACOVENE will visit four UK colleges this year

Here in the UK, we are justifiably proud of the standards set for the training and education of veterinary nurses. We take it for granted that all qualifications, and their supporting college or university programmes, lead to an agreed standard of 'day-one competence'. Veterinary nurses are registered, and the RCVS keeps a watchful eye on standards and quality.

However, this isn't necessarily the case in other European countries. There is quite significant variation between countries in the content, standard and level of training, which can vary from undergraduate to secondary education level. Some countries regulate veterinary nurses and some do not. And, in some cases, the interpretation of 'veterinary nursing' differs from our UK expectation.

Meeting expectations

This might not, at first sight, seem very relevant to day-to-day practice in the UK. But the high demand for qualified nurses, along with attractive opportunities to gain experience and improve English language skills, is attracting a steadily increasing number of EU-trained nurses to seek employment in Britain. From an employer perspective, it's obviously very important to know what can be expected of an overseas-trained VN, and for them to be able to register quickly with the RCVS.

This is where ACOVENE comes in. It was set up via an EU-funded project in 2007 to provide an agreed and transparent set of minimum standards for expected VN day-one competence and the delivery of educational programmes. It's overseen by the Federation of European Companion Animal Veterinary Associations (FECAVA) in order to ensure the standards remain in touch with practice, and employer, needs.

An employer recruiting a nurse from an ACOVENE-accredited school therefore has some assurance of the minimum level of knowledge and skills he, or she, will have. ACOVENE accredits schools of veterinary nursing in Norway, Sweden, Ireland, Belgium, the Netherlands and Italy. In addition, the RCVS is affiliated to ACOVENE, which means that we undertake to ensure all schools of veterinary nursing (regardless of the qualification they offer) meet the published accreditation standards.

Feedback

What does this mean for UK colleges and universities? In practice, nothing in addition to the approval criteria for centres that are set by the VN Council. These standards intentionally articulate with those of ACOVENE, so that the standards for veterinary nursing programmes in the UK clearly meet European expectation.

“High demand for qualified nurses, is attracting a steadily increasing number of EU-trained nurses to seek employment in Britain.”

We provide an annual report to ACOVENE, and all colleges and universities delivering VN qualifications are subject to periodic audit by ACOVENE visitors. The reports of such visits feed back to the VN Council and, via the RCVS, to the programmes and awarding institutions concerned. This external check on our quality assurance of VN education gives very useful feedback on its effectiveness, and provides a fresh perspective on UK VN education.

In 2012, visitors from the Netherlands and the Republic of Ireland audited Greenmount College in Northern Ireland; however, two more scheduled visits unfortunately had to be postponed. This year, the ACOVENE Board has designated four visits to UK colleges and universities. We don't know in advance where these will be and, like the colleges concerned, will be informed six weeks in advance of the visitation.

An ACOVENE audit visitation is a one-day event, carried out by two visitors who have no connection with any UK college, university or awarding body. From the visited college's perspective, this operates in a similar way to an external verification visit. Visitors will ask to tour college facilities, have sight of course and student management documentation, and meet with staff (including directors) and students. Outline feedback is given on the day and a report is provided to the ACOVENE Board, and then to us at the RCVS.



Vector – the final furlong

European project nears completion

After jumping many a hurdle, we are now into the final straight of piloting the Vector (Veterinary European Clinical Training and Assessment Record) project.

Following a successful meeting of the six partner schools in Amsterdam in June 2012, some exciting improvements have been made to the Clinical Training and Assessment Record (CTAR). The 'Quick Start' option allows a coach/tutor to bypass the 'Add Note' demonstration processes in cases where they are certain that their student has already been shown how to perform safely and effectively, and is ready to commence logging experience without immediate supervision.

The highlighted stars showing progress with each skill now have additional functions, meaning that coaches/tutors and students can:

- Hover over the stars and view a description of the current stage of that skill
- Click on the stars (instead of 'Add Note') to go directly to the next stage of the process, allowing data entry

These changes, along with others, such as messaging, enhanced quality assurance and student progress functions, will be incorporated in to the RCVS Nursing Progress Log (NPL) in the coming months.

As the project draws to an end, there will be a dissemination conference at Amiedu, Helsinki, on **29 August 2013**.

As well as presenting the project results and products, this will also be an important opportunity to network with other VN and veterinary educators. It's free of charge and we hope

to see UK centres well-represented, so please put the date in your diary. For more information on the project, or to reserve a place at the conference, please contact Julie Dugmore at j.dugmore@rcvs.org.uk, or visit the Vector website www.vector.org.



Discontinuing professional development?

Audit results not inspiring

The results of the 2012 audit of registered veterinary nurses (RVNs) continuing professional development (CPD) have shown a disappointing level of compliance from some individuals.

The audit took place from July to September, and we received a response from 933 of the 1,090 RVNs whose records we asked to see. Although the vast majority of these had recorded at least 45 hours averaged over the past three years (2009, 2010 and 2011), some 333 nurses had not met our CPD requirements. In fact, 80 RVNs said they had undertaken less than five hours of CPD over the whole three years.

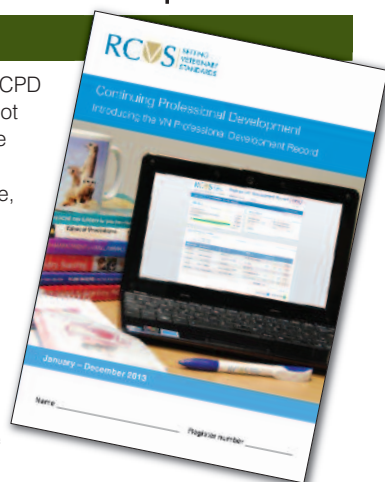
The most frequent reasons RVNs gave for not recording or doing enough CPD were maternity leave and small children, and part-time working. The cost of CPD was also mentioned.

RVNs who work part time need to be fully competent, which makes it as important for these VNs to undertake the full amount of CPD as it is for their full-time colleagues. The RCVS CPD requirement is averaged over three years, allowing RVNs the flexibility to fit hours spent on CPD around periods of maternity leave.

There are lots of CPD options that do not involve expensive courses or study days, for example, taking part in practice-based study groups, undertaking structured and recorded personal research, or preparing a case presentation.

The majority of RVNs do fulfil their requirements, accepting that CPD obligations are part and parcel of a modern profession. VN Council will consider possible action against the minority who do not.

For ideas and help with planning and recording CPD, VNs can sign up for the free VN Professional Development Record at www.rcvs.org.uk/education/cpd-for-vns.



Breaking records at Congress

Good feedback for PDR demos

Over 300 veterinary nurses, veterinary surgeons and other practice staff entered our competition while visiting the RCVS stand at BVNA Congress in October.

We were there to promote our new online CPD recording system, the Professional Development Record (PDR), and our competition continued the theme with a series of questions about record-makers, and breakers. The lucky winner of a £50 iTunes voucher (well, it would have been record tokens in the old days...) was Annie Cartwright RVN, from the Dogs Trust in Loughborough.

"I enjoyed Congress, and the free calculator has made totting up the CPD hours earned easier!"

Visitors to the stand could view a demo of the new PDR, the online tool that makes planning, recording and evaluating CPD much easier, and pick up a free calculator to remind them of the link: www.vnpdr.org.uk.

Annie commented: "I enjoyed Congress, and the free calculator has made totting up the CPD hours earned easier!"

Meanwhile, RVN Rebecca Lindon, from Hertfordshire, won a £50 iTunes voucher in a similar competition that we held at the London Vet Show in November.

Get cracking with the PDR

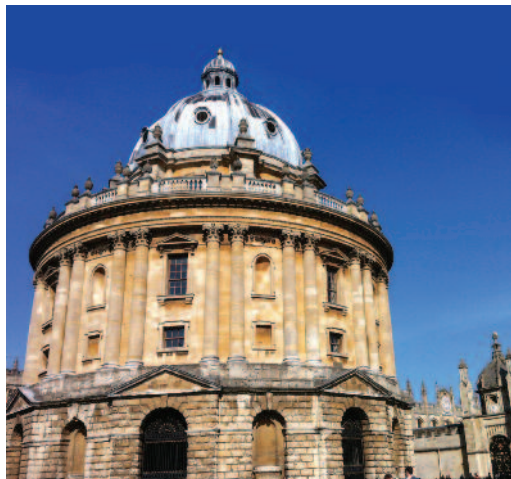
If you want to get your CPD organised in 2013, why not sign up to the PDR?

It's free, and easy to use:

- 1) Visit www.vnpdr.org.uk and click 'Register for CPD'
- 2) Fill out the simple registration form, for which you will need your VN number
- 3) Click on the account activation email that will be sent to you (please keep an eye on your spam box!)
- 4) Log on with your user name and password (which you choose when you register) and start planning and recording your CPD!

Oxford – seat of learning?

Your opportunity to quiz the Officers



On 13 February, the RCVS Regional Question Time team will be visiting Oxford. It's your chance to quiz the Officers and members of VN Council about what's going on at the College, and our chance to learn from your comments and opinions.

Topics covered at the last Regional Question Time, near Glasgow, included the use of social media to better engage with the profession, VN training and different routes to qualification, how to encourage more members to vote in Council and VN Council elections and the new online CPD recording system, the Professional Development Record.

The event will start at 6.30pm with a buffet supper, followed by the meeting at 7.15pm.

Personal invitations will be sent to all those within an hour or so's travelling distance, and you can also let Fiona Harcourt know if you wish to attend, on f.harcourt@rcvs.org.uk.

Standards surgeries

During the daytime of 13 February, we will be holding free 45-minute workshops for those thinking of joining the Practice Standards Scheme, or facing a re-inspection, or those who are keen to better understand the Core Standards of the Scheme, now that all veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses need to meet them. Contact Fiona to book your slot with one of the Practice Standards Inspectors.



Feedback, in theory

Tips on improving pass rates

The theory examination results were issued in December, and, unfortunately, students continue to struggle with some aspects of paper 2. We hope that feedback on poorly-answered topics will assist in targeting assistance.

A total of 834 Level 3 Diploma examinations were taken at Pearson Vue professional test centres, with 366 students sitting paper 2, *Animal health, husbandry, form and function*, which comprises 135 questions covering units VN3 and VN4.

Students find this examination challenging and pass rates are consistently lower than in the other examinations. However, since July 2011, 1,300 students have passed this paper, and many of these candidates achieved a mark of over 70%, so it's quite possible to do well.

Skeleton key

This paper tests ability to apply knowledge of anatomy and physiology in practical situations. However, questions relating to the anatomical boundaries of body cavities and identification of parts of the skeleton (important in relation to physical examination and diagnostic imaging, for example) are poorly answered. There are usually several enquiries following the examination, asking why radiography is being tested in paper 2, however, we sometimes use radiographs as a practical way of testing some aspects of these questions. No knowledge of radiography is required,

just a practical grasp of anatomy. Questions on the anatomical structure of birds and reptiles are also poorly answered. Knowledge of organs is generally good, with the exception of the liver, male gonad and special sense organs.

In questions relating to VN4 (*Applied animal welfare, health and husbandry for veterinary nurses*), students need to become more familiar with the role of essential nutrients. Many candidates also have a poor understanding of breeding cycles, foetal development and neonatal care.

Horseplay

A significant number of queries about paper 2 relate to the use of questions involving horses. Some candidates are only prepared for questions relating to small animals, despite the assessment criteria clearly stating which species will be covered. The good news is that, generally, students are able to answer the questions correctly and few candidates fail the examination purely because of the inclusion of equine questions.

On the subject of horses, students who are registered for all pathway units of the RCVS Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing are reminded that they should prepare for equine and small animal stations to be included in their OSCE. The published marking criteria contain details about which qualification each station assesses.

Video, nasty?

Video may not be your friend in an exam dispute

The latest in our series that debunks some of the exam myths out there.

Myth: videoing students undertaking the OSCE would provide definitive evidence of the student's performance.

Fact: occasionally, students ask why we do not video them undertaking the OSCE. They feel such recordings could be used in the event of marking disputes. Published research indicates there are some advantages to videoing examinations; however, these may not necessarily benefit students.

The use of video is more suitable for OSCE stations that test patient examination or communication skills

but is less useful where the skills are of a more intricate nature. Even if it were possible to position cameras at every OSCE station in every exam centre, these couldn't be relied on to confirm, for example, that candidates focused a microscope correctly, drew up the correct quantity of medication, or set up an IV giving set without introducing air into the tubing.

The vast majority of post-examination investigations relate to performance that would not reliably be picked up on camera. We'd like to reassure candidates that all examiners receive training in observing and marking the performance of technical skills in detail, thereby reducing the likelihood of errors.

Last NVQ exams coming up

July is final opportunity

The number of students entering NVQ examinations is now in single figures, however, there are still around 80 such candidates working towards qualification.

The Level 3 VRQ examinations will continue to be held for the last few remaining students until July 2013. It's therefore very important that remaining NVQ Level 3 students are entered on time for these exams.

Colleges need to ensure that their students are entered by 3 May for the June theory examination, and 7 June for the July practical examination. Those entering for exams also need to have completed their portfolios.

If your centre or training practice has NVQ final-year students taking a break from training, please make every attempt to contact and support them, so that they don't miss these assessment opportunities.

We cannot issue any further NVQ certificates after 31 July 2013, so any NVQ students who have not achieved their qualification by this date will need to transfer to a Level 3 Diploma qualification (with either Central Qualifications or City & Guilds) in order to qualify as a veterinary nurse.

Who does what...

Libby Earle:	<i>Head of Veterinary Nursing</i>
Annette Amato:	<i>Deputy Head of Department, Awarding Body Board Secretary, Secretary to VN Council</i>
Julie Dugmore:	<i>Quality assurance and EV liaison</i>
Vicky Hedges:	<i>Examinations and higher education quality assurance</i>
Helen Cook:	<i>Centre approvals and monitoring, ACOVENE support</i>
Ben Myring:	<i>Examinations, overseas registration applications</i>
Alison Rengert:	<i>External Verifier</i>
Liz Troman:	<i>External Verifier</i>

NB EVs are home-based and may be contacted direct or via the VN Department on the details below.

Practical examinations (OSCE)

Spring 2013

Closing date for entries	22 February
Exam weekend	22 – 24 March
Results published	25 April

Summer 2013

Closing date for entries	7 June
Exam weekend	5 – 7 July
Results published	8 August

Autumn 2013

Closing date for entries	16 August
Exam weekend	13 – 15 September
Results published	17 October

Winter 2013

Closing date for entries	1 November
Exam weekend	29 November – 1 December
Results published	January 2014

Theory examinations (e-assessment)

Spring 2013

Closing date for entries	11 January
Appointment booking window	4 February – 1 March
Exam weeks	4 March – 17 March
Results published	11 April

Summer 2013

Closing date for entries	3 May
Appointment booking window	28 May – 21 June
Exam weeks	24 June – 7 July
Results published	15 August

Winter 2013

Closing date for entries	13 September
Appointment booking window	30 September – 25 October
Exam weeks	28 October – 10 November
Results published	12 December

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