



Global recognition

New process for recognising international qualifications

In this issue: new handbooks for VN trainers, VN Council elections, Vet Futures roadshows, review of Day One Skills, VN CPD audit, webinar series, international qualifications, Know your Schedule 3, new animation promoting VNs, Mind Matters initiative, Regional Question Time report, Find a Vet update, protection of title, exam dates.

A handy guide to VN education

New handbooks on our role

This month, we have published new handbooks that provide information about our role as a regulator for all those providing veterinary nurse training and qualifications.

There are three handbooks in total, aimed at awarding organisations and higher education institutions, centres and colleges delivering veterinary nurse qualifications on behalf of awarding organisations, and training practices.

Each handbook contains information covering all aspects of regulation of VN education, including our accreditation process, approval criteria, visitation teams and Day One Skills and Competences, among other topics.



Julie Dugmore explains:

"Prior to the publication of these handbooks, all this information existed in various different documents spread across our website. We want to provide as much guidance and advice to new and prospective awarding organisations and higher education institutions as possible in terms of our processes and regulatory requirements, so we thought it

would be a good idea to collate all this information in one, easy-to-find place."

The three handbooks, which also include sections on the Veterinary Surgeons Act and international VN accreditation, are available to download from www.rcvs.org.uk/publications.

Latest Training Practice numbers

As of 1 January 2015, there are a total of **2,155 Training Practices in the UK compared to 2,030 at the beginning of 2014.**

Although this small increase is good news, we would still welcome more practices to apply for Training Practice status. Practices can apply by contacting their nearest college delivering veterinary nurse training. A list of these can be found at www.rcvs.org.uk/tpllist.

VN Council 2015 election results

Liz Cox and Lucy Bellwood elected



Liz Cox, Vice-Chair of VN Council, has been re-elected following this year's VN Council elections, where she will be joined by newcomer Lucy Bellwood.

Every one of the 12,485 registered veterinary nurses was entitled to vote for their preferred two candidates. In total, 1,379 registered veterinary nurses (a turnout of 11%) took part in the elections with Liz Cox receiving 630 votes and Lucy Bellwood receiving 914. The only other candidate, Marie Rippingdale, received 381 votes.

Chair of VN Council, Kathy Kissick, says: "It's encouraging that voter numbers have risen slightly in this year's election, especially in such an auspicious year where the introduction of the new Royal Charter for the RCVS means that we are now formally regulated by the College and recognised as true professionals in our own right. My congratulations to both Lucy and Liz on their success."

Lucy Bellwood will begin her four-year term on VN Council at RCVS Day in July where it is expected that Liz Cox will also be confirmed as the new Chair of VN Council.

Seeking external quality assurer

We are looking for an external quality assurer (EQA) for our DipAVN to help maintain academic standards and ensure rigorous, robust and fair assessments.

Applicants need to be an RVN or UK-practising veterinary surgeon with significant experience in assessment and verification and with at least a Level 6 qualification in a related area. They should have substantial post-registration experience and should work within a Training Practice, college and/or higher education institution in a position that involves training.

For a full job description and specification, visit www.rcvs.org.uk/workforus.

The closing date for applications is Friday, 5 June 2015 at 5pm.

Help us shape the profession's future

Vet Futures hits the road

In May and June, the RCVS and the British Veterinary Association (BVA) will be visiting Manchester, Edinburgh and Swansea for our series of free Vet Futures roadshows in which we encourage veterinary nurses, vets and other members of the practice team to debate and share their views on the future of the profession.

Vet Futures, a joint RCVS and BVA initiative, aims to help the profession identify and prepare for the issues that will affect it in coming years and these events are intended to encourage people to share their hopes and fears for the future.

The three events in May and June will be at:

- **Manchester**, Novotel Manchester West, Monday 18 May, 6.30pm to 10pm
- **Edinburgh**, Scottish Parliament, Friday 5 June, 8am to 10am
- **Swansea**, Village Hotel, Wednesday 17 June, 6.30pm to 10pm

If you attend any of these events you can also hear about the latest Vet Futures research, as well as having the opportunity to discuss ambitions for the future of the profession with colleagues from your region.

The Manchester and Swansea events start at 6.30pm with a buffet meal while the Edinburgh event includes breakfast. The meetings are free to attend but please confirm your attendance one week in advance for planning and security reasons. To register for an event please visit www.vetfutures.org.uk/events.



Reviewing clinical skillsets for new VNs

Views of educators and practitioners sought

Within the next month we will be launching a consultation asking members of the profession and those involved in veterinary nurse training and education to comment on a revised set of Day One Skills for veterinary nurses.

The current Day One Skills document was developed by RCVS Awards, our awarding body, in 2010 and provides a list of those skills we expect student veterinary nurses to have gained by the end of their training, and to be competent and confident in when they first go into practice.

As RCVS Awards will be closed by the end of this year, we are taking the opportunity to review the Day One Skills to bring them closer into line with our recently revised Day One Competences, and to reduce the number of required skills in order to make it more relevant to clinical practice.

Julie Dugmore, Head of Veterinary Nursing, explains: "The current document was developed from an awarding

body perspective and not that of the regulator, so it specifies a large number of non-clinical skills, for example, handling and moving equipment safely, which, while important, are somewhat out of our regulatory remit.

"The proposed new Day One Skills will be more focused on making sure that new veterinary nurses have safe and effective clinical skills and an understanding of Schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act, its implications and the activities it covers.

"A Day One Skills Working Party was set up following the last VN Education Subcommittee in March and has now produced a draft list of skills. We will shortly be consulting on this list and would very much welcome the opinions of higher education institutions, awarding organisations, centres, and training practices, as well as student and registered veterinary nurses."

The consultation is expected to be launched at the end of May or beginning of June. Once live, you can take part in it by visiting www.rcvs.org.uk/consultations.

Audit of VN CPD

Three-quarters meeting requirement

The majority of registered veterinary nurses (RVNs) are meeting our requirement for continuing professional development (CPD) according to an audit of compliance carried out last year.

The *Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses* states that RVNs must undertake a minimum of 45 hours of CPD over a rolling three-year period (averaging 15 hours per year) in order to keep their skills and knowledge up-to-date.

In 2014, we asked a random sample of 525 RVNs from across all UK postcode areas to share their CPD records with us. Of the 489 who responded, 75.4% achieved our requirement.

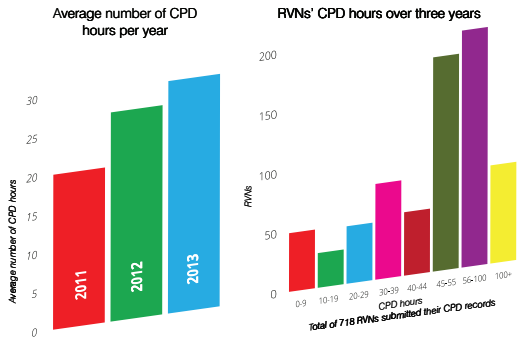
As part of the auditing process, we also asked two other groups of RVNs for their records – one group comprised 182 RVNs who responded to the 2013 CPD audit but were non-compliant, while the other comprised 47 RVNs who failed to supply their records when requested in 2013. The compliance rate for these two groups was 41% and 34% respectively.

Jenny Soreskog-Turp, the College's CPD Officer, commented: "As with previous years, the most frequent reasons given for not having completed our requirement were maternity leave, family commitments and part-time working. A number of respondents were not aware

that the requirement to undertake CPD remains in place as long as they are on the Register, even if on maternity leave.

"We also found that a number of veterinary nurses believed that they could only count 'formal' learning such as attending courses as CPD. However, a wide range of activities constitute CPD, which can also cover a wide range of topics – including non-clinical skills. The key is that it should be relevant and applicable to the individual and their role."

More details about CPD, including what can count as learning and development and how to record CPD, can be found at www.rcvs.org.uk/education/cpd-for-vns/.



Interactive topical learning

RCVS webinar series

This year we are running a series of webinars on topics of interest to registered and student veterinary nurses – from how to engage in continuing professional development to the upcoming changes to our Practice Standards Scheme.

We started the year with a webinar entitled 'Veterinary nurses and the law' with Kathy Kissick, Chair of VN Council, and our Registrar Gordon Hockey. The webinar was very well attended and garnered a number of questions from veterinary nurses about how Schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act applied to their everyday practice. Please read pages 6 and 7 of this publication for a feature on Schedule 3 and delegation to student and registered veterinary nurses.

Education was the focus in April with a webinar from VN Council's Liz Cox and Kit Sturgess from RCVS Council about CPD, including what it constitutes and how best to record it.

Earlier this month we also held a webinar on our concerns investigation process and how practitioners can avoid complaints from animal owners.

In June, Jacqui Molyneux, Chair of the Practice Standards Group, and Pam Mosedale, our PSS Veterinary Advisor, will be presenting a webinar about the upcoming extensive changes to our Practice Standards Scheme.

For more details about upcoming webinars and to listen again to previous ones please visit www.rcvs.org.uk/webinars – remember, they can count towards your CPD requirement!

International reach

Framework for accrediting non-UK qualifications

Following a meeting of the VN Education Subcommittee in March, we have now developed a new framework for accrediting international veterinary nursing courses and qualifications.

At the meeting, Subcommittee members agreed a framework for accrediting awarding organisations and higher education institutions delivering veterinary nursing qualifications wholly or partially outside of the UK. The changes had already been approved in principle by VN Council at its February 2015 meeting.

Accreditation process

The key change is that international veterinary nursing training providers (whether awarding organisations or higher education institutions) may now apply to have their qualifications accredited by us. If accredited, their students would not need to apply to have their qualification assessed, or undertake pre-registration examinations or a Period of Supervised Adaptation (PSA) before joining the Register. This would bring them into line with veterinary nurses qualifying from non-UK institutions recognised by the Accreditation Committee for Veterinary Nurse Education (ACOVENE), of which we are a member.

In addition, colleges outside the UK may seek approval from a UK awarding organisation or higher education to deliver UK-accredited qualifications.

Julie Dugmore, our Head of Veterinary Nursing, explains: "Although international veterinary nursing training providers can now apply for accreditation, it would be dependent upon them meeting the same stringent criteria as their UK counterparts.

"For example, they would be subject to many visitations to monitor the standards of teaching and the curriculum; their students would need to spend a requisite amount of time gaining first-hand clinical experience in training practices; and, we would need to be satisfied that their graduates meet the skills and competences we expect from all newly-qualified veterinary nurses.

"As part of the process, we would also conduct visits to affiliated training practices to ensure that the quality of their practical clinical training adheres to the standards we expect from UK practices."

How to apply

Institutions that would like to apply for accreditation should email vnoverseas@rcvs.org.uk in the first instance, at least one year before the first intake.

The formal application process will be discussed and a timeline for implementation agreed. Any institutions applying for recognition with us will also need to be accredited by an equivalent organisation or government body in their country of origin.

Registration changes

At the same meeting, the VN Education Subcommittee also clarified and formalised the registration rules for veterinary nurses who wish to join the UK Register and qualified outside both the European Union (EU) and European Economic Area (EEA).

Veterinary nurses trained outside the UK will continue to have their qualifications assessed against UK standards. From now on, all non-EU/EEA trained veterinary nurses and some EU/EEA trained veterinary nurses (those qualifying from institutions not accredited by ACOVENE) will have to pass pre-registration theory and practical examinations.

All registrants trained outside the UK (including all those from EU/EEA countries) will have to come to our offices in London so we can check their documentation. At the same time, we will explain to them the principles of the *Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses* (www.rcvs.org.uk/vncode) and won't confirm registration until we are satisfied that these have been understood.

The full details of our international qualification accreditation requirements and the application process, as well as information for international registrants, can be found in the *Awarding Organisation and Higher Education Institution Handbook* (see page 2) which is available to download from www.rcvs.org.uk/publications.



Know your Schedule 3

Advice and guidance on VNs and the law

Our Veterinary Nursing and Professional Conduct Departments both deal with queries about Schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act and delegation to veterinary nurses on an almost daily basis. Many of these queries come from Training Practices and centres asking what student veterinary nurses can and can't do.

While in most cases we cannot give a definitive list of what registered veterinary nurses or student veterinary nurses can undertake and what procedures fall within and without the remit of Schedule 3, we can give some definitions to help those delegating procedures to registered and student veterinary nurses to consider whether it is in accordance with the law and our *Code of Professional Conduct*.

This article also covers some of the more practical frequently asked questions we receive about delegating to veterinary nurses and Schedule 3.

What is 'veterinary surgery'?

The obvious starting point is to define 'veterinary surgery'. In the Veterinary Surgeons Act it is described as:

- (a) the diagnosis of diseases in, and injuries to, animals including tests performed on animals for diagnostic purposes;
- (b) the giving of advice based upon such diagnosis;
- (c) the medical or surgical treatment of animals;
- (d) the performance of surgical operations on animals.

What can be done by people other than veterinary surgeons?

Schedule 3 of the Act allows anyone to give first aid in an emergency for the purpose of saving life and relieving suffering. The owner of an animal, or a member of the owner's household or employee of the owner, may also give minor medical treatment such as giving routine oral medication. There are a number of other exceptions to the general rule in addition to the exceptions that apply to veterinary nurses.

What is a veterinary nurse?

We define a veterinary nurse as a person whose name is entered in our Register of Veterinary Nurses.

What can a veterinary nurse do under Schedule 3?

A veterinary nurse may undertake any medical treatment or any minor surgery (not involving entry into a body cavity) providing:

- (a) The animal is under the care of a veterinary surgeon and the treatment is carried out at his or her direction.
- (b) The veterinary surgeon is the employer of the veterinary nurse or is acting on behalf of the nurse's employer.
- (c) The directing veterinary surgeon is satisfied that the veterinary nurse is qualified to carry out the treatment or surgery.

It is not a right of the veterinary nurse to carry out certain tasks, but vets are entitled to delegate to them, if appropriate.

What is medical treatment?

It is not possible to give a definitive list as it involves consideration of circumstances as well as the procedures.

When deciding to delegate, the veterinary surgeon must consider how difficult the procedure is in the light of any associated risks, and whether the nurse is qualified to treat the species concerned, understands the associated risks and has the necessary experience and good sense to react appropriately if any problem should arise. The veterinary surgeon must also ensure that they will be available to answer any call for assistance, and finally, should be satisfied that the nurse feels capable of carrying out the procedure competently and successfully. Furthermore, a veterinary nurse may only carry out limited veterinary surgery under the direction of a veterinary surgeon.

The procedures that veterinary nurses are specifically trained to carry out include:

- (a) Administration of medication by mouth, topically, by the rectum, by inhalation or by subcutaneous, intramuscular or intravenous injection.
- (b) Administration of other treatments, including oral, intravenous and subcutaneous rehydration; other fluid therapy; catheterisation; cleaning and dressing of surgical wounds; treatment of abscesses and ulcers; application of external casts; holding and handling of viscera when assisting in operations; and, cutaneous suturing.
- (c) Preparation of animals for anaesthesia and assistance in the administration and termination of anaesthesia, including premedication, analgesia and intubation.
- (d) Collecting samples of blood, urine, faeces, skin and hair.
- (e) Taking X-rays.

What is a student veterinary nurse?

A student veterinary nurse is defined in Schedule 3 as a person enrolled with us for the purpose of undergoing training at an approved training and assessment centre or a veterinary practice approved by such a centre.

A 'trainee' on an in-house course is not recognised under this definition.

What can a student veterinary nurse do?

Under Schedule 3, a student veterinary nurse can carry out all the procedures a registered veterinary nurse can (subject to the considerations detailed above) but there is a requirement for them to be supervised. A student veterinary nurse may administer 'any medical treatment or any minor surgery (not involving entry into a body cavity)' under veterinary direction providing:

- The animal is under the care of a veterinary surgeon and the treatment is carried out at his or her direction.
- The veterinary surgeon is the employer of the student veterinary nurse or is acting on behalf of the nurse's employer.

- The treatment or minor surgery is carried out in the course of the student veterinary nurse's training. In our view, such work should be undertaken only for the purpose of learning and consolidating new skills.

The treatment or surgery must be supervised by a veterinary surgeon or a registered veterinary nurse. In the case of surgery, the supervision must be direct, continuous and personal.

In our view, a veterinary surgeon or registered veterinary nurse can only be said to be supervising if they are present on the premises and able to respond to a request for assistance if needed. 'Direct, continuous and personal' supervision requires the supervisor to be present and giving the student veterinary nurse their undivided personal attention.

What can an unqualified nursing assistant do?

There is no legal dispensation for a veterinary surgeon or registered veterinary nurse to delegate to a lay person employed by a practice, regardless of their training or experience. Please see Chapter 19 of our supporting guidance – 'Treatment of animals by unqualified persons' – at www.rcvs.org.uk/unqualified for full details.

Frequently raised topics

1. Cat castrations

It is against the law for a veterinary nurse to castrate a cat. This is specifically excluded by Part II of Schedule 3 to the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966.

2. Dental hygiene work

Veterinary nurses and student veterinary nurses working under the direction of a veterinary surgeon may carry out routine dental hygiene work. The extraction of teeth using instruments may readily become complicated and should only be carried out by veterinary surgeons. We consider that the extraction of teeth using instruments is not within the meaning of 'minor surgery' in Schedule 3.

3. Vaccinations

A second vaccination (which is carried out some two weeks or so after the first) is usually authorised by the veterinary surgeon at the time of the first vaccination. A second vaccination would therefore

be directed by the veterinary surgeon when the animal is under his or her care and when the clinical assessment is carried out, and so the administration of the second vaccination may be carried out by a veterinary nurse or student veterinary nurse at the practice, provided the veterinary surgeon is not intending to certify this vaccination.

4. Prescriptions

It is not legal or appropriate for a veterinary nurse to prescribe a POM-V medicine. POM-V medicines must be prescribed by a veterinary surgeon, who must first carry out a clinical assessment of the animal under their care. POM-VPS medicines must be prescribed by a veterinary surgeon, pharmacist or Suitably Qualified Person (SQP). Veterinary nurses who are also SQPs should prescribe responsibly and with due regard to the health and welfare of the animal.

For further details see www.rcvs.org.uk/vetmeds.

Getting animated about veterinary nursing

VN Awareness Month 2015



This month (May) the British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA) will be asking veterinary nurses and all those who work with them to help spread the word to the general public about the importance of the profession for animal health and welfare.

VN Awareness Month is particularly important this year because not only is the BVNA celebrating its 50th anniversary, but our new Royal Charter has also given the profession long overdue recognition as a fully regulated and qualified profession. To promote the month, the BVNA has produced a promotional poster (included in the May edition of the *Veterinary Nursing Journal*) as well as a dedicated Facebook page.

In order to help spread the word about the importance of the profession, we have developed a video animation aimed at animal owners to highlight how registered veterinary nurses play a key role in veterinary practices, in the care and treatment of animals and in educating owners on how to maintain the health of their animal.

For example, the animation describes the training that registered veterinary nurses have to undertake, the fact that they are expected to abide by our *Code of Professional Conduct* and keep their knowledge and skills up-to-date by engaging in continuing professional development. Crucially, the video tackles the fact that, with no protection of title, anyone can technically call themselves a 'veterinary nurse' – even if they are not qualified or registered (please see article on page 11).

You can view the video via our home page (www.rcvs.org.uk/vntitle), YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/rcvsvideos) and our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/thercvs) – please feel free to share with your colleagues, clients, friends and family. You can also find the video on Twitter via the hashtag **#vntitle**.

For more details on what the BVNA will be doing for National VN Awareness Month, please visit www.bvna.org.uk/news/veterinary-nursing-awareness-month.

Mind Matters to tackle mental health and wellbeing

mind matters



New initiative to increase access to help

The new RCVS-led Mind Matters Initiative (MMI) aims to help address mental health and wellbeing issues within the veterinary team by increasing the accessibility and acceptance of support, encouraging a culture that is better equipped to deal with stress and related mental health issues, and, ultimately, by helping to reduce mental ill-health triggers within the profession.

The first MMI action was to provide funding to ensure that VNs and vets calling the Vet Helpline (a volunteer-run confidential support service that

is part of the Veterinary Benevolent Fund), are put through to a person, rather than having to leave a message. The new Vet Helpline number is **0303 040 2551**, and there is also a confidential email service, via www.vetlife.org.uk.

A range of MMI activities are in the pipeline, and a new website is under development.

MMI is supported by a taskforce that includes the British Veterinary Nursing Association, among other key veterinary organisations.

Seminar for VN qualification providers

Updates on enrolments, fitness to practise and marking schemes

On Thursday 30 April, we held a seminar for awarding organisations and higher education institutions delivering veterinary nursing licence to practise qualifications to update them on the latest developments at the College.

Top of the agenda was student veterinary nurse enrolments including an examination of what went wrong for the 2014/2015 cohorts, where there were some significant delays in our enrolment process. Chloe Baxter, Enrolment Officer, updated delegates on the measures implemented to avoid future delays, which included dedicated support during the busiest times of the year when there can be up to 120 enrolment applications per day. Chloe also gave hints and tips for completing applications to help with a smoother enrolment process.

“Top of the agenda was student veterinary nurse enrolments including an examination of what went wrong for the 2014/2015 cohorts.”

Fitness to practise and fitness to study were also discussed. Kathy Kissick, Chair of VN Council, provided advice and guidance from her own experiences within the educational environment focusing on the fact that student veterinary nurses are expected to be professionals from the commencement of their training. Our recent publication, *Fitness to Practise – A Guide for UK Veterinary Schools and Veterinary Students*, was reviewed and delegates encouraged to participate in

the development of similar guidance for student veterinary nurses.

Victoria Hedges, Examinations Manager, provided delegates with information on an easy-to-use electronic marking scheme for both theory and practical assessments. Using a short survey completed by delegates, Vicky demonstrated very quickly how results of the survey could be uploaded onto a spreadsheet. This illustrated a method of marking student assessments without the need of human intervention which can introduce the possibility of human error. Delegates were impressed with this system.

Other updates were given on our Vet Futures and Mind Matters initiatives, Training Practice approval processes and examiner training.

The meeting also gave our Veterinary Nursing Team the opportunity to disseminate the newly published handbook (see page 2), which provides advice and guidance on our accreditation processes for licence to practise qualifications.



Guildford Question Time

Vet nursing session held

At our Regional Question Time in Guildford in March, we held separate discussions for veterinary and veterinary nursing topics for the first time, to allow members of each profession more time to discuss issues of relevance to them.

Topics discussed at the veterinary nurse session included out-of-hours and student veterinary nurses, acupuncture, UK veterinary nurses undertaking US-based veterinary technician courses, and how to make the public more aware of the profession.

The two groups reconvened for the second half of the evening for a session that focused on the joint RCVS and BVA Vet Futures project, which aims to help the profession identify and prepare for those issues which may affect it in the future.

Delegates were divided into groups and asked to identify future issues facing the profession. They were then given a number of potential future scenarios – such as the pet insurance market collapsing and 90% of practices being owned by corporate – and were asked to identify opportunities and threats in each.

Find a Vet listings

If you're not on the Register, you're not coming in

Recently, our Veterinary Nursing Department has written to a number practices advising them that, if they ask for veterinary nurses to be listed in their Find a Vet entry, those nurses must be on our Register.

Our Find a Vet online search tool (www.findavet.org.uk) allows members of the public to find practices close to where they live, as well as search for practices by type of animal treated, RCVS-accreditation, Specialist or Advanced Practitioner status, and other criteria. Practices listed on the search tool can request that staff members at the practice are listed under their entry.

However, five practices have recently asked us to list 'veterinary nurses' in their Find a Vet entries and, upon

making checks, we have discovered that the person in question was not registered. In some cases they were student veterinary nurses; in others, they were individuals who had finished a veterinary nursing qualification but never applied to join the Register.

The practices in question have been reminded by letter that practices should not be referring to unregistered staff as veterinary nurses, and that any such staff should not be performing Schedule 3 procedures, as to do so would be in breach of the Veterinary Surgeons Act and therefore illegal.

If you would like to check the registration status of any veterinary nurses please visit www.rcvs.org.uk/registration/check-the-register.

Student VNs and the National Minimum Wage

Changes to current training requirements

Last month we sent letters to all colleges and higher education institutions that offer veterinary nursing training to inform them of a VN Council decision to remove the requirement to undertake 60 weeks of practical training in response to HM Revenue & Customs National Minimum Wage Regulations (NMWR).

Under the current NMWR, work experience undertaken by students as part of UK-based higher or further education courses is exempt from the national minimum wage provided that the work experience placement does not exceed a **period of one year**.

Although the 60 weeks requirement has now been removed, the requirement to complete 2,100 hours will, however, remain in force and students will still be required to complete the Day One Skills for Veterinary Nurses as assurance of their competency at the point of registration.

Students close to the end of their training will not be expected to work unreasonable hours to complete the requirement of 2,100 hours of practical training. If a student completes the Day One Skills in less than 2,100 hours, this will not necessarily preclude them from joining the Register and applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Please bear in mind that there are ongoing discussions around our current list of Day One Skills (see page 3).

If you have any other questions about the changes to veterinary nurse training, please contact Julie Dugmore, Head of Veterinary Nursing, on j.dugmore@rcvs.org.uk.



Play your part in protecting the profession

VN title campaign launched

Most people would, rightly, be horrified if they were treated by someone who referred to themselves as a medical nurse but who, it transpired, had no qualifications or training and could not be held accountable to a regulator if something went wrong.

And yet we know anecdotally that this is the case for many animals being cared for by those calling themselves veterinary nurses who are nothing of the sort. Some may have the qualifications but haven't joined the Register or kept up their registration, while others have no training whatsoever.

In any case, they are not entitled to carry out Schedule 3 procedures and, in the view of the College, it is misleading for them to refer to themselves as veterinary nurses and potentially harmful to animal health and welfare.

Last piece of the puzzle

While the new Royal Charter has done much for the cause of regulating veterinary nurses – by formally recognising them as a registered profession for the first time – one piece of the jigsaw puzzle is still missing. Unfortunately, the Charter cannot protect the title 'veterinary nurse' and so, as outlined above, untrained, unqualified and unregistered lay people cannot be prevented by any legal means from using the title – only a change in the law can do this.

However, protecting the title remains one of our long-term aims, as set out in our Strategic Plan, and we are now actively campaigning for an amendment to the Veterinary Surgeons Act in order to achieve this.

Protecting the title 'veterinary nurse' is widely supported by the veterinary nursing profession. This is evidenced by a 2012 HM Government e-petition, calling for the statutory regulation of veterinary nurses (including title protection) which received over 2,500 signatures. Furthermore, protection of the title is supported by the British Veterinary Nursing Association and the British Veterinary Association, with both organisations having recently stated their support.



Our Chief Executive, Nick Stace, says: "The nation's animals and owners deserve better than the current situation. There is widespread support amongst the profession for such legislation, so we are in the process of drawing up a Bill and are prepared to offer significant support to any parliamentarian willing to pick up this worthy cause."

How you can help

So, what can individual veterinary nurses and veterinary surgeons, as well as practices, do to advance this cause? A starting point would be to make sure that unqualified, unregistered lay people working in practice do not refer to themselves as a veterinary nurse – even if they do so informally. Animal Care Assistants, for example, play a crucial role in modern veterinary teams in terms of providing care for animals and support for veterinary colleagues and they should feel proud of identifying themselves as such. It is more helpful and less misleading to clients if there is clarity on each staff member's role and what they can and can't do.

We would also encourage all veterinary professionals to help make the animal-owning public more aware of what veterinary nurses do, their qualifications and training, and what it means to be part of a regulated profession.

Next steps

For our part, we are in the process of drawing up a proposed bill on how the Veterinary Surgeons Act could be amended, which we will use as a platform for lobbying both Members and Peers when Parliament reconvenes after the General Election. We will also be encouraging veterinary nurses, veterinary surgeons and members of the public to help spread the word about our campaign by writing to their local MP.

For the latest information and updates about our campaign, and to find out how you can help, please visit www.rcvs.org.uk/vntitle.



RCVS Awards examinations

The final RCVS Awards examinations take place in June prior to the awarding body winding down in December. Entry to the theory exam, which takes place between 15 and 20 June, has now closed.

Applications for the final OSCE (practical examination), which is being held between 26 and 28 June, must be received by Friday 29 May. Students registered for the RCVS Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing who do not intend to sit these examinations must contact their college to discuss transferring to another awarding organisation. Failure to do so will mean that your enrolment will be ended and your employment as a student veterinary nurse will cease.

Pre-registration examination dates

The pre-registration examination is available for nurses who have trained outside the UK and have been informed that they are eligible to sit the exam. In addition, nurses who have completed an RCVS-accredited qualification with provisional approval may be required to sit the pre-registration examination.

Application forms are available to eligible applicants by emailing vnoverseas@rcvs.org.uk or by contacting the Veterinary Nursing Department on 020 7202 0788.

Who does what...

Julie Dugmore	<i>Head of Veterinary Nursing</i>
Annette Amato	<i>Deputy Head of Veterinary Nursing, Awarding Body Board Secretary, Secretary to VN Council</i>
Victoria Hedges	<i>Examinations Manager</i>
Helen Bourne	<i>Centre approvals and monitoring, ACOVENE support</i>
Annah Bhebe (currently on maternity leave, replacement tbc)	<i>Examinations, Diploma in Advanced Veterinary Nursing, overseas registration applications</i>
Sophie Jamieson	<i>Initial VN registrations and certifications</i>
Chloe Baxter	<i>Student enrolments and careers</i>
Lily Lipman	<i>Accreditation and quality monitoring for VN qualifications</i>

Practical examinations

Summer 2015 (RCVS Awards)

Examination date	26–28 June
Closing date for entries	29 May
Venue	CAW (Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire)

Autumn 2015 (Pre-registration examinations)

Examination date	17–18 October
Closing date for entries	18 September
Venue	MYF Training (Aldershot, Hampshire)

Winter 2015

Examination date	27 February
Closing date for entries	29 January
Venue	CAW (Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire)

Spring 2016

Examination date	18 June
Closing date for entries	20 May
Venue	MYF Training (Aldershot, Hampshire)

Summer 2016

Examination date	22 October
Closing date for entries	23 September
Venue	CAW (Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire)

Theory examinations

Autumn 2015

Examination date	25 November (paper 1)
	26 November (paper 2)
	27 November (paper 3)
Closing date for entries	2 November
Venue	RCVS – London

CONTACTING US | [E vetnursing@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:E.vetnursing@rcvs.org.uk) | **T** 020 7202 0788 | **F** 020 7222 2004

Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, Belgravia House, 62–64 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2AF | www.rcvs.org.uk



Printed by an ISO 14001 certified printer using 100% vegetable-based inks on a totally chlorine-free FSC certified stock www.sterlingsolutions.co.uk

RCVS | SETTING VETERINARY STANDARDS