

## RCVS Continuing Professional Development (CPD) policy for veterinary surgeons 2020

### Introduction

1. As part of the *RCVS Code of Professional Conduct*, all veterinary surgeons are required “to maintain and develop the knowledge and skills relevant to their professional practice and competence and comply with RCVS requirements on the Professional Development Phase (PDP) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD)”. This may be through a self-directed learning programme which is likely to combine both formal and informal CPD elements. Members must recognise their limitations, and, with the possible exception of an emergency (see the *Code of Professional Conduct*), should not undertake those activities for which they feel unqualified as a result of being out-of-date or lacking specific training.
2. Guidance on what may constitute CPD is provided on the RCVS website. The RCVS does not specify the subjects or activities that must be covered for CPD, nor does the RCVS specify the type of CPD undertaken. It is a matter for the individual veterinary surgeon to identify the most appropriate learning and development activities appropriate to their professional practice, and to keep records of such activities so that they can account, if required, for how they have kept themselves up to date. With such a degree of flexibility and professional judgement allowed, it is therefore appropriate to require all veterinary surgeons on the practising Register, whether working part time or full time, in clinical practice or non-clinical practice, to comply with the minimum requirement of 35 hours per annum.
3. In line with its responsibility for the practice of veterinary surgery in the UK, the RCVS expects employers to consider both their personal CPD needs and those of their employees. This would extend from the internal provision already provided by all responsible employers to external provision in line with the mission of the practice or other organisation and the duties and responsibilities of the employees. Employers should also take care to ensure that the PDP and CPD records of new employees qualify them for the position to which they are being appointed.

### Appropriate CPD

4. There is more to CPD than undertaking a Certificate, Diploma or attending a conference. CPD occurring at work and self-directed learning can also provide good learning opportunities. CPD that is relevant and of benefit to any aspect of a veterinary surgeon’s professional life may be considered to be appropriate and recordable CPD. For example, practice and other management skills, stress management, mentorship and communication skills are as important as other forms of CPD that relate more directly to veterinary medicine and surgery.

### Amount of CPD – recommended annual minimum

5. The RCVS expects that veterinary surgeons will undertake sufficient CPD to maintain their professional competence and should undertake a minimum of 35 hours per calendar year as long as they stay on the practising Register.

6. CPD should be relevant to a veterinary surgeon's job role and occur on regular basis throughout the year.
7. Veterinary surgeons who are CPD compliant with the requirement of 105 hours in the 3-year period between 2017 to 2019 and achieved additional hours in accordance with the previous policy may carry over 25 hours of CPD to 2020. Veterinary surgeons can only carry over hours in surplus of 105 hours for the 3-year period and not count the hours twice. In subsequent years veterinary surgeons are not able to carry any hours over from one calendar year to the next.

#### **Absence from work**

8. The RCVS recommends veterinary surgeons taking time away from work for reasons such as parental leave, illness, caring for relatives or a career break to keep up with their CPD as long as they remain on the practicing Register. This is to ensure veterinary surgeons keep themselves up to date and place them in a stronger position once they return to work. Although it might be difficult to attend formal CPD, there are many informal CPD activities that can count towards the CPD requirement (such as reading veterinary literature/press, distance learning and keeping in touch days).
9. Veterinary surgeons who are unable to maintain their CPD requirement during an absence from work should change their status to non-practising. There is no obligation for non-practising members to undertake CPD.

#### **Non-practising status**

10. Veterinary surgeons can change their registration category from practising to non-practising or vice versa by logging into their RCVS 'My Account' and completing the change of category declaration form. The Registration Department will process any requests within 3 working days.

#### **Exceptional circumstances and planned period away from work**

11. In certain circumstances it may be difficult to meet the minimum CPD requirement. Any veterinary surgeon that is taking time away from work but needs to remain on the Register and is unable to fulfil the CPD requirement due to exceptional circumstances or a planned absence should apply to pause their CPD for up to 6 months. Veterinary surgeons can apply to pause their CPD through the RCVS CPD recording portal (1CPD), where possible applications should be supported by documents, for example a letter from a medical practitioner.
12. The number of hours needed to be completed within the year will be prorated according to the length of the pause.
13. Exceptional Circumstances may include:
  - serious ill health, accident or injury;
  - the death or serious illness of a close family member or dependant;
  - unforeseen significant change in family or carer responsibilities;
  - significant crisis directly affecting the individual, including recent disability

Planned absences may include

- Parental leave
- Other planned absences away from work

14. Veterinary surgeons who feel that they will not be able to meet the CPD requirement and is not eligible to pause CPD requirement and continues to practice should contact the RCVS. Individual circumstances and exceptions will be made on a case by case basis.

### Returning to work

15. When CPD is paused, it is important that a personal learning plan is developed. This plan should be developed as soon as possible and definitely within one month of the absence as part of the application. The plan should include a provision to undertake essential training prior to returning to the workplace or as part of a “back to work” induction plan.

16. Any veterinary surgeon returning to work after an absence of more than 6 months should update their CPD plan, reflect on their practice, identify any training needs and take appropriate steps to address them.

### The ethical obligation

17. The *RCVS Code of Professional Conduct* emphasises the importance of clinical governance and CPD and the RCVS considers it is the professional duty of all its members to be able to account for the methods by which they update their knowledge and skills. Veterinary surgeons are required to record their CPD and the RCVS record platform (1CPD) provides a system whereby members can keep a record of their learning objectives, notes on learning needs and reflections on their performance and all members are encouraged to make use of this system.

18. In support of this duty the RCVS, in common with other professional bodies, considers participation in CPD to be mandatory for all its members.