

RCVS Continuing Professional Development (CPD) policy for veterinary surgeons 2022

Introduction

1. As part of the *RCVS Code of Professional Conduct*, “*Veterinary surgeons must maintain and develop the knowledge and skills relevant to their professional practice and competence, and comply with RCVS requirements on the Veterinary Graduate Development Programme (VetGDP) / 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of Professional Conduct*), should not undertake those activities for which they feel unqualified as a result of being out-of-date or lacking specific training.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 record activities using 1CPD. 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. Veterinary surgeons will need to record their CPD using 1CPD and follow the outcomes-based cycle of plan, do, record and reflect.
4. 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.

Appropriate CPD

5. 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

6. 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.

7. CPD should be relevant to a veterinary surgeon's job role and occur on regular basis throughout the year.

Outcomes-based CPD

8. In addition to meeting the hour requirement veterinary surgeons also need to follow the outcomes based CPD cycle of plan, do, record and reflect.
9. The plan, recording of activities and reflections need to be recorded using 1CPD, unless an exemption has been granted.

Absence from work

10. 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).
11. 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

12. 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

13. 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.
14. The number of hours needed to be completed within the year will be prorated according to the length of the pause.
15. 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

16. 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

17. 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.

18. 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.

Overseas members

19. The CPD requirement to record 35 hours per calendar year and use the outcomes based cycle of plan,do,record and reflect is the same for all RCVS members. It is recommended that overseas members use 1CPD but it is not mandatory if they record their CPD with their national authority.

The ethical obligation

20. 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.

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

Guidance on Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for veterinary surgeons

Introduction

The *RCVS Code of Professional Conduct* makes it very clear that veterinary surgeons have a responsibility to ensure that they maintain and develop the knowledge and skills relevant to their professional practice and competence. The *Code* also requires veterinary surgeons to provide the RCVS with their CPD records when requested to do so. CPD is the personal obligation of all responsible veterinary surgeons and should be seen as the continuous progression of capability and competence.

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 practicing Register. It is appreciated that most veterinary surgeons will do considerably more than this.

What is Continuing Professional Development and why is it necessary?

The RCVS has adopted the definition of CPD as ‘the systematic maintenance, improvement and broadening of knowledge and skills and the development of personal qualities necessary for the execution of professional and technical duties throughout the member's working life.’ As members of a self-regulating profession, veterinary surgeons must maintain their competence and should be seeking to make continuous improvements to the standard of service they provide to their patients and clients.

The RCVS expects all its members to engage in CPD to ensure the maintenance of the highest professional standards in line with the promise each made on admission to membership, namely, "*I PROMISE AND SOLEMNLY DECLARE that I will pursue the work of my profession with integrity and accept my responsibilities to the public, my clients, the profession and the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and that ABOVE ALL my constant endeavour will be to ensure the health and welfare of animals committed to my care.*"

What counts as CPD?

Broadly speaking, any activities you undertake in order to further your professional competence as part of a planned development programme can be counted towards your CPD. You do not have to participate in 35 hours of face to face learning delivered by an external CPD provider.

Although this is not an exhaustive list, appropriate activities may include:

CPD occurring in the workplace

- Significant event analysis
- Formal case/practice discussions

- Clinical audit
- In-house training
- Peer review/feedback

Formal CPD

- Attending Courses/Seminars/Workshops
- Clinical skills labs
- Workshops
- Conferences
- Distance learning
- Studying for an external qualification

Self-directed learning

- Reading veterinary literature/press
- Research
- Preparing a new lecture/presentation
- Preparing and writing an article/paper
- Work-based observation

There is no restriction on the number of hours of self-directed learning that can count towards your CPD as long as you reflect on your CPD.

Ultimately, the judgement of what should count as CPD will vary for each individual, and it is therefore up to you to decide how best to fulfil your own learning needs. It is your responsibility to keep a record of your learning plans and activities, and to keep documented evidence of participation in courses and other activities.

New Registrants

When you first register with the RCVS your CPD requirement will start from your registration date and be calculated pro-rata for the first year depending on when you registered. If you registered in July, you are only expected to do 17.5 hours in the first year but then the full 35 hours in subsequent years.

VetGDP/PDP and CPD

If you are new graduate you will need to enrol in VetGDP, it will count towards your CPD requirement. We view undertaking and completing the VetGDP as a year's worth of CPD and it is therefore equivalent to 35 hours of CPD activity. If you started PDP prior to June 2021, you have until June 2024 to complete it.

Less than full-time

All veterinary surgeons listed on the RCVS Register as practising members must complete the minimum CPD requirement of 35 hours per year, regardless of whether they are working full-time or part-time. This applies equally to vets approaching retirement who may carry out only a small number of veterinary duties and procedures each year. If you are on the Register as a practising veterinary surgeon, you must fulfil your CPD obligations, regardless of how many hours you work so that you remain up to date.

Absences from work

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 help 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).

Non-practising status

Veterinary surgeons who are unable to maintain their CPD requirement during an absence from work are encouraged to change their status to non-practising. There is no obligation for non-practising members to undertake CPD.

You can change your registration category by logging into your RCVS 'My Account' and completing the change of category declaration form. The Registration Department will process any requests within 3 working days.

If you are listed on the RCVS Register of Members as inactive and non-practising, then you are not required to comply with the RCVS requirement of 35 hours per year. However, if you plan to return to practise at some point in the future, you are strongly advised to keep up-to-date with the profession and your area of practice, as far as possible. Keeping a record of CPD activities during any period away from practice will help you to plan and prepare for your return to work as a veterinary surgeon.

Parental leave, illness and other exceptional circumstances

We understand that in certain circumstances it may be difficult to meet the minimum CPD requirement. If you are away from work but still need to stay on the Register but feel that you are unable to fulfil the CPD requirement due to exceptional circumstances or a planned absence you should apply to pause your CPD for up to 6 months. You can apply to pause your through the RCVS CPD recording portal (1CPD), where possible applications should be supported by documents, for example a letter from a medical practitioner.

There are no restriction on the number of times that you can apply to pause your CPD but applications cannot be made retrospectively. If you are not using the recording portal 1CPD you should contact the RCVS to pause your CPD.

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
- absence caused by parental leave

Planned absences may include:

- parental leave
- sabbatical
- other planned absences away from work

If you have problems meeting the CPD requirement and are not eligible for a pause you should contact the RCVS by email cpd@rcvs.org.uk or call 020 7202 0701. Individual circumstances and exceptions will be made on a case by case basis.

Returning to work

When you return to work after pausing your CPD the requirement will be calculated pro-rata; therefore if you pause your CPD for 6 months between July and December you are only expected to undertake 17.5 hours in that calendar year. Your CPD requirement will reset again in January and you be expected to undertake the full requirement of 35 hours but you do not need to make up any hours from the previous year.

When CPD is paused, it is important that you develop a personal learning plan. This plan should be developed as soon as possible and definitely within one month of the absence as part of your application. A template for the plan is available on the recording portal 1CPD but 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. When you are returning to work you should update your CPD plan by reflect on your practice, identify any training needs and take appropriate steps to address them.

If you are returning to work after being either on the non-practising Register or off the Register, your CPD requirement starts from when you restore back to the practising Register. Your CPD requirement for the year that you return will be calculated pro-rata depending on the timing of your restoration. For example if you restore to the Register in July you are only expected to do 17.5 hours of CPD in that calendar year.

When you return to work you are recommended create a CPD plan by reflect on your practice, identify any training needs and take appropriate steps to address them, you wish use the PDP section of the online record in order to benchmark and track your PDP competences. Once you return to practice, you should not undertake any procedures for which you are not competent. You may find it useful to undertake a 'return to practice' refresher course before you start back at work and/or arrange for some supervision when you start back until you feel confident to work unsupervised.

Planning your CPD

You should review your CPD needs regularly and plan ahead so that you can make the most of development opportunities as they arise. Planning ahead will also enable you to take part in more cost-effective and focused activities, rather than attending seminars or other events *ad hoc*, and then finding that they perhaps did not meet your needs. If you take part in an appraisal process at work, this will help you to identify areas you need to concentrate on, and should also provide you with an auditable record of your agreed development plans and activities. Remember that undertaking CPD is not just about attending courses - it's about continuing your professional learning in whatever way best helps you to maintain your competence and helps you to improve the professional service you provide.

Recording CPD

1CPD is the RCVS CPD recording platform and it is available as a web portal and as a mobile app that allows vets to record and reflect on their professional development.

It is mandatory for all UK registered veterinary surgeons to record their CPD using 1CPD but it is possible to apply for an exemption.

The application will be reviewed by the CPD Policy and Compliance Committee and if it is approved the CPD records need to be uploaded to your My Account by the 15th January each year. Your records must meet the RCVS CPD requirement and follow the cycle of plan, do, record and reflect.

Reflecting

There has been increasing recognition over a range of different professions that CPD records based on 'inputs' alone, for example, measuring the number of hours attending a lecture, do not necessarily prove that any significant learning has taken place or that this learning will be used to improve professional practice. By contrast, research has demonstrated that CPD activities focused on outcomes encourage professionals to reflect on what they have learned, how they will apply their learning and how it will improve their practice, which has a positive impact on professionalism and patient health outcomes.

Reflection does not have to be time consuming and the 1CPD app offers the flexibility of using guided reflection, open text boxes or voice recording notes. These three headings may help you to reflect:

- How did this CPD relate to your learning needs and plan?
- What are the key things you learned?
- What impact has the CPD undertaken had to you as a professional or in your role?

Submission of CPD record

CPD records need to be submitted with applications for RCVS Certificates, Diplomas, Advanced Practitioner and Specialist status, and will be viewed during inspections for approval under the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme. The RCVS also inspects CPD records for all veterinary staff when it

undertakes its statutory visits to the veterinary schools. The RCVS may at times undertake random sampling of CPD records in order to monitor CPD participation so you could therefore be invited to submit your records at any time. Records may also be requested from members who are subject to investigation and disciplinary proceedings.

Information about courses and other CPD activities

The RCVS does not itself accredit any CPD courses but there are various sources of information, such as the CPD Events Calendar published in *In Practice*. The various BVA specialist and regional divisions organise CPD events, as do universities and many commercial CPD providers.

The RCVS Charitable Trust Library can help you meet your continuing professional development targets. The Library holds over 30,000 books, reports and conference proceedings, all available for postal loan upon request. In addition, for a small annual membership fee, library members can enjoy access to the Trust's range of electronic resources from their own computer. This includes being able to download full-text articles from a wide range of journals and carry out your own literature searches with access to millions of abstracts. Library membership also provides substantial discounts on services such as photocopies of journal articles, postal loans, literature searches and quarterly updates. Quarterly updates are lists of bibliographic references of recently published articles on a particular subject.

Overseas practising members

All vets on the practising register, whether they are home practising register or the overseas register, must comply with the RCVS requirement. You may include CPD undertaken abroad, but you should ensure that your description of this, and the hours involved, are clearly recorded in English so that the details of what you have done are transparent to, and understood by, the RCVS and others with an interest in your CPD record, such as prospective and current employers. It is recommended that overseas registrants use 1CPD to record their CPD and reflections but it is not mandatory if they record it with their national authority.

Course accreditation

The RCVS does not accredit or otherwise 'kitemark' activities designed and marketed by training providers as CPD, as it considers that members should identify and plan their CPD to meet their own individual skills and knowledge developmental needs as practising vets. It is the responsibility of each vet to record the number of hours spent on their CPD activities. CPD providers may find it useful to benchmark their courses against the modules in the Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice and make it clear to those who attend whether the course is intended to cover some or all of the learning objectives of the CertAVP modules.