

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

Introduction

1. As part of the *RCVS Code of Professional Conduct*, all veterinary nurses are required “to maintain and develop the knowledge and skills relevant to their professional practice and competence and comply with RCVS requirements on the *Period of Supervised Practice (PSP)* 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their limitations, and should not undertake those activities for which they feel unqualified as a result of being out-of-date or lacking specific training.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 nurse to identify the most appropriate learning and development activities appropriate to their professional practice, and , and to record activities using 1CPD. All veterinary nurses on the Register, whether working part time or full time, in clinical practice or non-clinical practice, must comply with the minimum requirement of 15 hours per annum.
3. Veterinary nurses must record their CPD using 1CPD and should aim to 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 the CPD needs 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 workplace 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 nurse’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.

Amount of CPD – recommended annual minimum

6. The RCVS expects that veterinary nurses will undertake sufficient CPD to maintain their professional competence and should undertake a minimum of 15 hours per calendar year as long as they stay on the Register.

7. CPD activity should ideally be spread throughout the year and recorded as soon as possible after completion of the activity. When attending events in which a large number of hours of CPD are undertaken this should be captured and reflected on in smaller chunks linked to specific learning outcomes.
8. CPD should be relevant to a veterinary nurse's job role and occur on regular basis throughout the year. It is recommended that CPD is recorded in 1CPD on a regularly basis but veterinary nurses must update their record for each calendar year by the 31 December.

Outcomes-based CPD

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

Absence from work

11. The RCVS recommends veterinary nurses 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 Register. Although it might be difficult to attend formal CPD, there are many activities that can count towards the CPD requirement (such as reading veterinary literature/press, distance learning and keeping in touch days).
12. Veterinary nurses who are unable to maintain their CPD requirement during an absence from work are encouraged to remove their name from the Register. Any veterinary nurse that removes their name from the Register for a time period of up to 18 months are not required to pay a restoration fee in order to return to the Register.

Exceptional circumstances and planned period away from work

13. In certain circumstances it may be difficult to meet the minimum CPD requirement. Any veterinary nurse 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 nurses 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 nurses 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 commencing 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 nurse 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

19. 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.

Guidance on Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for veterinary nurses

Introduction

The *RCVS Code of Professional Conduct* makes it very clear that veterinary nurses 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 nurses to provide the RCVS with their CPD records when requested to do so. CPD is the personal obligation of all responsible veterinary nurses and should be seen as the continuous progression of capability and competence.

The RCVS expects that veterinary nurses will undertake sufficient CPD to maintain their professional competence and should undertake a minimum of 15 hours per calendar year as long as they stay on the Register. It is appreciated that most veterinary nurses 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 nurses 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 15 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 you can count as CPD for each category as long as you evidence it by reflecting on your learning.

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 7.5 hours in the first year but then the full 15 hours in subsequent years.

Less than full-time

All veterinary nurses listed on the RCVS Register must complete the minimum CPD requirement of 15 hours per year, regardless of whether they are working full-time or part-time. If you are on the Register 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 nurses 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 Register.. Although it might be difficult to attend formal CPD, there are many CPD activities that can count towards the CPD requirement (such as reading veterinary literature/press, distance learning and keeping in touch days).

Removing your name from the Register

Veterinary nurses who are unable to maintain their CPD requirement during an absence from work are encouraged to remove their name from the Register.

You can come off the Register 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 no longer on the Register then you are not required to comply with the RCVS's requirement of 15 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 nurse.

Once you are ready to return to the Register you can restore by completing a restoration form in your RCVS 'My Account'. Any veterinary nurse that removes their name from the Register for a time period of up to 18 months are not required to pay a restoration fee in order to return to the Register.

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 and 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 six 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. However, it may be more appropriate for a veterinary surgeon to move to the non-practising register than to apply for a number of pauses.

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

If you have problems meeting the CPD requirement and are not eligible for a pause you should contact the RCVS by email on cpd@rcvs.org.uk or call 020 3795 5595. 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 7 hours in that calendar year. Your CPD requirement will reset again in January and you be expected to undertake the full requirement of 15 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 commencing, 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 off the Register, your CPD requirement starts from when you restore back to the 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 7 hours of CPD in that calendar year.

When you return to work you are recommended to create a CPD plan by reflect on your practice, identify any training needs and take appropriate steps to address them. Once you return to practice, you should not undertake any procedures for which you are not competent.

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 veterinary nurses to record and reflect on their professional development.

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

Exemption

The application for exemption to use 1CPD 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.

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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?

- 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 records

The RCVS may at times undertake random sampling of CPD record cards in order to monitor CPD participation so you could therefore be invited to submit your record card at any time. Records will also 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. 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 available.

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.

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 registered veterinary nurses. It is the responsibility of each nurse to record the number of hours spent on their CPD activities.