RCVS Continuing Professional Development Policy 2015

Introduction

1. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) can be defined 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.”

2. It is a requirement of RCVS that all its members engage in CPD, as defined above, 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.”

3. The RCVS has recognised (see Education Strategy Steering Group Report 2002), in line with other Health Professions, that the initial veterinary clinical degree (BVetMed, BVMS, BVM&S, BVSc, VetMB, DVM) produces highly qualified graduates with a full range of basic clinical skills, relevant to all the domestic and a number of exotic species, and the potential to proceed to advanced clinical competence in any species or discipline. National and international demand and need for the development and maintenance of advanced clinical skills necessitate lifelong learning on the part of all members of the profession.

4. The RCVS introduced a scheme of self-recording of CPD in 1997. Record Cards and Guidance Notes are issued to Members annually. It is RCVS policy for all veterinary surgeons to complete their CPD record cards. The RCVS’s Code of Professional Conducts requires all veterinary surgeons to provide the RCVS with their PDP and CPD records when requested to do so.

   From 2012, Members can use the RCVS on-line Personal Development Record (PDR) to keep records of their CPD, instead of using the printed card.

Policy

CPD requirements for veterinary surgeons

5. As part of RCVS’s 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.

6. Guidance on what may constitute CPD is provided on RCVS’s website and with the RCVS Record Card and online Professional Development Record. RCVS does not specify the subjects or activities that must be covered for CPD, nor does 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 105 hours over a rolling 3 year period.

7. 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.

Amount of CPD – recommended annual minimum

8. The RCVS expects that veterinary surgeons will undertake sufficient CPD to maintain their professional competence. As guidance, it recommends that, at the very least, veterinary surgeons should undertake an average of 35 hours per annum over a 3 year period (i.e. a minimum of 105 hours over 3 years), whether in full or part-time employment

The ethical obligation

9. The RCVS Code of Professional Conduct emphasises the importance of clinical governance and CPD and 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. The online Professional Development Record 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.

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

CPD monitoring

11. Copies of completed CPD record cards must be submitted with applications and re-applications, where applicable, for:
• Certificate in Advance Veterinary Practice
• Final approval of experience for Diploma candidates, for each year of experience offered
• RCVS Recognised Specialist status
• Practices that are members of the Practice Standards Scheme
• Veterinary Nursing approved training centre status
• Veterinary Hospitals
• RCVS statutory visitations to the veterinary schools, when the records of staff are inspected
• Officers and Council Members of RCVS
• RCVS CPD surveys, to monitor CPD participation
• Those seeking re-admission to the Register for any reason
• All practising members are asked annually to confirm their compliance with the Code of Conduct and that they are aware of CPD requirements when they renew their RCVS registration.

Where a veterinary surgeon is also required to keep a CPD record card for another professional body, e.g. Royal College of Pathologists, he/she is still required to complete their RCVS record.

12. Completed RCVS CPD records for all veterinary teaching staff must be kept up-to-date and be available on request by RCVS. For those members using the online RCVS Professional Development Record, RCVS can monitor their summary CPD records online when required. If access is needed to the more detailed notes kept in the member’s PDR, then the RCVS would seek the member’s permission.

Non-practising and retired members
13. There is no legal obligation on non-practising members paying the non-practising-members retention fee to undertake CPD.

Monitoring of CPD uptake
14. RCVS may from time to time conduct a survey where it selects between 10% and 20% of its members on a random basis and asks them to submit their record cards for a specified period. It is important, therefore, for all members to keep their record cards up-to-date. In future, this may be done online for those using the online PDR.

15. The College’s Membership database allows for each Member’s annual CPD participation to be recorded on his/her Membership record where appropriate.
Maintaining the high profile of CPD

16. Regular communication with the profession on CPD matters takes place through the following routes:-
   • the issue annually of a new record card and guidance notes to all Members. The record card will cover the period 1 January to 31 December. Members who currently use a different calendar year to record their CPD should aim to come in line with the January to December CPD year as soon as possible, even if this requires the use of two cards in one year;
   • regular articles on CPD in the RCVS Newsletter which is sent to all Members three times a year;
   • regular articles on CPD in the veterinary press;
   • publicising CPD at regional meetings;
   • guidance on the RCVS website.

Appropriate CPD

17. There is more to CPD than undertaking a Certificate or Diploma. CPD is much broader than veterinary medicine and surgery. 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 and communication skills are as important as other forms of CPD that relate more directly to veterinary medicine and surgery.

CPD providers and courses

18. RCVS does not accredit CPD courses. Course providers are encouraged to offer courses appropriate to a wide range of experience and to state the level at which a course is aimed when marketing that course. Course providers are also encouraged to ensure appropriate quality control by feedback from participants.

19. The development of a modular structure for RCVS certificates allows for courses to be more closely attuned to the needs of veterinary surgeons working towards RCVS qualifications, making it easier for veterinary surgeons to identify structured CPD that is relevant to modules and qualifications.

Link with practices

20. The RCVS recognises the benefits of each practice having an individual appointed as CPD liaison officer. It is RCVS policy to encourage such an appointment to facilitate liaison both within the workplace and with CPD providers.

Further encouragement to Members to undertake CPD

21. The RCVS Knowledge Library offers help and guidance for Members taking part in informal CPD as well as providing a wide variety of information needed by candidates for Certificates, Diplomas and
other qualifications. The RCVS Knowledge Library may also be able to play a role in supporting electronic journal clubs.

**Links between CPD, complaints and claims**

22. Improved analysis of complaints by RCVS and insurers is making it possible to identify areas of weakness in practice in which the RCVS will wish to encourage the provision of CPD courses. For example, the Veterinary Defence Society identified communication skills as a deficiency and supported developments in the undergraduate curricula in the veterinary schools, and CPD for recent graduates. Liaison between the RCVS and insurers in the future should help to identify other areas that could usefully be addressed by CPD courses.

23. This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis.