

RCVS Fellowship: Credentials Panel Guidance Notes

Background and membership

1. The objective of the Fellowship is to advance veterinary standards by providing a resource of independent knowledge for the benefit of the veterinary profession. The foundation of the activities of the Fellows will be based on:
 - Advancing veterinary standards by undertaking independent scientific reviews to establish scientific fact
 - Being a source of evidence-based fact and promulgating these findings
 - Promoting excellence in the veterinary profession and communicating this to the public and
 - Nurturing the next generation of veterinary professionals.
2. The Credentials Panels are the groups that review and assess applications for Fellowship. The Chairs of these panels make recommendations on the award, or otherwise, of the Fellowship to the Fellowship Board.
3. There are three Credentials Panels which make up the overall panel, each covering a different route to Fellowship:
 - Meritorious Contribution to Clinical Practice (MCCP)
 - Meritorious Contribution to Knowledge (MCK)
 - Meritorious Contribution to the Profession (MCP)
4. Members of each panel are appointed by the Fellowship Board following an initial application and/or nomination to join the panel.
5. Each panel will have a Chair appointed in the same way. The role of the Chair will be to act as the liaison between the Board and the panel and to collate the assessments of applications from the panel before making their final recommendation to the Board.
6. Membership will be rolling, based on a three-year cycle.

The Fellowship Board

7. The Fellowship Board consists of:
 - the Chair
 - the immediate Past Chair
 - the Vice-Chair from the Fellowship
 - the Vice-President of RCVS
 - the Chair of the MCCP Panel
 - the Chair of the MCK Panel
 - the Chair of the MCP Panel

- Two Project and Engagement Members
 - a lay member
8. The Board shall set the criteria for Diploma of Fellowship by Meritorious Contributions to the Profession; to Clinical Practice; and to Knowledge. The Board will also approve the process by which applications are received, processed and assessed.
 9. The Board will make the final decision on the outcome of all applications for the Diploma of Fellowship by Meritorious Contributions to the Profession; to Clinical Practice; and to Knowledge.

Application process

10. The criteria for achieving Fellowship are as follows:
 - Original innovative discovery or application of knowledge or development of the veterinary profession in a ground-breaking way
 - Sustained contribution to scholarship
 - Producing a body of creative work that will have been disseminated, for example,
 - in a body of publications,
 - in teaching materials,
 - in educational documents,
 - in political documents
 - Indisputable advancement of their subject
 - Providing leadership to the veterinary profession
 - Advancement of the public understanding of the veterinary profession
11. Applications will be accepted during an application period agreed by the Fellowship Board. The applications should include:
 - Details of the applicant and their career history
 - A mandatory 2000-word summary describing their contribution to the advancement of the subject area, or to practice or the profession, depending on the route chosen
 - A personal statement explaining why they are applying and what they hope to contribute to the Fellowship
 - A portfolio of material that supports their application (there is no defined structure for the portfolio but guidance notes would be available)
 - Signed forms from two professional referees, stating that the application is true and complete to the best of their knowledge.
12. The RCVS Fellowship Secretariat will allocate applications randomly to five members of the relevant panel. Members will be asked to alert the Secretariat where a conflict of interest may arise. In such instances, the application would be passed to a different member (see point 28 for further information on conflicts of interest).
13. The applications and assessment forms (see Annex A) will be sent out to the allocated members with a deadline by which the assessments will need to be returned to RCVS.

14. All of the applications will also be sent to the respective Credentials Panel Chair. Additionally, they will receive a spreadsheet listing the applications allocated to each individual Panel Member.
15. Applications will be considered against meeting at least one or more sections of the criteria and Panel Members will be asked to score each of the applications as either:
 - 0 – the standard is not achieved
 - 1 – borderline not achieved
 - 2 – borderline achieved
 - 3 – clearly meets the standard
16. Members will also be asked to provide comments and full explanation on their decision.
17. Once all completed assessment forms have been received by RCVS, the applications and assessments will be sent to the Chair of the panel who will review the conclusions of the assessments.
18. The Chair will then conduct their own assessment, acting as the 4th assessor, of the application. Based on the earlier five assessments and their own subsequent assessment they will then make a final recommendation, which should also include an explanation for their decision.
19. The role of the Panel Chair is to make the final recommendation to the Fellowship Board on the award of the Fellowship based on the assessments and comments received from the panel and their own independent assessment.
20. There may be cases where the outcome is clear with agreement amongst all assessors. However, where there is an outlying score, the Chair will query the score with that assessor. The aim of this is for the Panel Chair to better understand the rationale behind the score, not to seek a change in score from that Panel Member. The Chair will then make the final recommendation to the Board if they are happy with the outcome, or potentially refer the application for further assessment if they feel this is necessary.
21. In the event that the overall score from the assessors is borderline (between 1½ - 2), the application will automatically be sent for further assessment. In this case, the RCVS Fellowship Secretary will find two new Panel Members to assess the application. This additional panel may be comprised of Panel Members from the same route, or from the other routes.
22. Chairs may also decide to refer an application to another panel where it is felt that an application is better suited to a different route. In this instance, the applications in question will be re-allocated to five members of the relevant panel, before being forwarded to the Chair of the panel.
23. The Fellowship Board, as the 5th assessor, makes the final decision based on the recommendation of the relevant Panel Chair.
24. Contentious applications will be discussed at the Board meeting. Therefore, the recommendation from the Credentials Panel Chair may not be agreed as the final outcome.

25. RCVS will aim to inform all applicants of the results within two weeks following the meeting.
26. Unsuccessful applicants will be given feedback and guidance and will be encouraged to update their applications with new information for consideration the following year or later if they wish to be reconsidered. It is hoped to be able to provide a mentor for unsuccessful applicants if they would like one.
27. Once successfully accepted into the Fellowship there is no re-review/re-accreditation process, but Fellows will be removed for non-payment of fees or upon ceasing to be on the RCVS Register.

Conflicts of interest

28. It is recognised that Panel Members are likely to know some of the applicants. In most cases, this will not amount to a conflict of interest and they will feel comfortable in assessing their applications. There may, however, be cases where members feel they do have a conflict of interest and would prefer not to be involved in the assessment. In particular, where a Panel Member has a current direct working relationship with an applicant, for example in the same department or practice, or has a close personal relationship. In these cases they should not assess the application and it will be passed to another Panel Member. In order to be transparent, there is space at the end of the review form to report either that the assessor knows the applicant, or that there is a conflict of interest. Panel Members will be asked to notify RCVS of any conflicts of interest when applications are first allocated.
29. In a situation where the Chair of a credential panel becomes aware of a possible conflict of interest the above should also apply. In the event that it would be improper for them to act as the 4th assessor and make a recommendation to the Board, the responsibility should pass to the most appropriate Chair of one of the other Credential Panels.
30. Under no circumstances should Credentials Panel and Board members act as referees for applicants.

Fellowship Application Assessment Form

Applicant name/number				
Fellowship Route				
Recommendation	0 – not achieved	1 – borderline not achieved	2 – borderline achieved	3 – clearly meets the standard
Comments				

Assessed by:	
Date:	
Time taken to assess application:	
Please state if you know the applicant but have no conflict of interest in assessing the application	
Please state if you feel you have a conflict of interest in assessing this application	