

**TO NON VETERINARY UNIVERSITIES**

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Dear Colleague

**INVITATION TO SEEK ACCREDITATION FOR PROVIDING MODULES TOWARDS THE  
RCVS POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN ADVANCED VETERINARY PRACTICE**

The RCVS, as well as serving as the statutory regulator for the veterinary profession in the UK, has powers under its Royal Charter to examine and award postgraduate Certificates, Diplomas and Fellowships to veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and others. I am writing to you now to invite your university to take part in a new scheme to offer and award CPD modules as part of a national credit accumulation system for practising veterinary surgeons.

A few years ago, we undertook a major review of our long term education and training strategy and we are now in the process of implementing a number of the recommendations that emerged. For many years, RCVS has been running postgraduate examinations for veterinary surgeons leading to RCVS Certificates and Diplomas in over 20 different species and discipline areas. These qualifications have served the profession well in terms of raising general standards of professional practice, but have been based around a traditional, 'all-or-nothing' examination which has not allowed for recognition of achievements along the way. Furthermore, being based on specialisms, the Certificates have been less suited to many of our members who are based in general first opinion practice and who would welcome a more flexible, modular structure for the qualification.

To meet these changing needs, RCVS is gradually phasing out its existing Certificates and is introducing a new modular structure, leading to a postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice. The proposal is a major new departure for the profession, and we hope it will enable even more members to work towards a recognised postgraduate qualification by gaining credit points as they achieve various modules.

One of the key features of the new system is that RCVS wishes to delegate the assessment of individual modules to universities which it will accredit for the purpose. I am writing to provide you with more information about the new modular Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice and to invite your university to consider whether it might wish to take part in this important initiative by submitting proposals to award modules under the scheme. This invitation is not

limited only to universities with veterinary schools, as there are a number of other institutions with postgraduate programmes and research interests that will be of relevance to veterinary surgeons. Examples include aspects of professional business practice, public health, epidemiology and bio-informatics, professional ethics and animal welfare, clinical audit, and many other topics.

Although there are a number of successful commercial and charitable CPD providers serving the profession's continuing education needs, we have agreed that accreditation to provide assessments under the new system should only be open to universities. This recognises their experience in running assessments and their quality assurance systems, as well as the fact that they are publicly accountable institutions. We will, however, also welcome proposals from universities that wish to enter into partnership with other, non-HE organisations and veterinary associations – such bodies will be able to help with course delivery and may be able to help provide veterinary expertise to support the assessment process. Provided the outcomes are quality assured by the university, we would like to encourage such collaborative ventures as this will help to increase access to modules and stimulate a variety of CPD provision.

The new Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice is based on a credit accumulation and transfer model, consistent with the QAA frameworks for higher education qualifications in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and in Scotland. The full postgraduate certificate is pitched at postgraduate 'M' level, representing a total of 60 credit points, or 600 notional learning hours.

We are also keen to see opportunities opened up for candidates to gain credits not only towards the RCVS Certificate but also towards Masters degrees and, possibly in the future, professional Doctorate programmes. The new modular system provides an exciting opportunity for universities to integrate RCVS modules with their own postgraduate awards or alternatively **to submit their own postgraduate modules, in areas not already covered by the RCVS framework, to become part of a national veterinary credit accumulation system. This will help universities to widen the market for their own awards, as well as providing candidates with a variety of progression routes to choose from.** If you would like to explore this further, please contact Mrs Freda Andrews, Head of Education at the RCVS, tel: 0207 202 0702 or email [f.andrews@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:f.andrews@rcvs.org.uk)

I am **enclosing** a paper describing in more detail the aims and structure for the Certificate, as well as the **administrative rules** that will apply to universities and candidates. A copy of the **bye-laws** for the new system which have recently been agreed by RCVS Council is also enclosed. Universities that are accredited to award modules will be required to sign a simple accreditation agreement with RCVS, and a copy of this is also enclosed for your information.

A **list is enclosed showing titles** of modules that have been produced or are currently under development. This list is not comprehensive and we will welcome proposals for subjects that are not already covered by the list. We will welcome expressions of interest from any university that wishes to take part in the system, either to award individual modules, or groups of modules. Please let us know if you are interested in exploring any of these further - write to the RCVS Education Department, indicating which modules you may be interested in awarding and we will send you further details of the modules concerned.

### **Timescale**

We will be pleased to receive proposals for accreditation from September onwards, and aim to hold the first accreditation meeting in October 2006, to be followed by further meetings on an 'as-needs' basis. There will be no closing date for applications, as we are conscious that universities will need time to develop their proposals. However, in order to assist our planning, **we would welcome an indication from you by 1 October as to whether your university is considering submitting proposals for accreditation.**

Finally, RCVS will need to charge a fee to cover its basic administrative costs for accreditation. The fees have not yet been agreed, but we hope to keep these as low as possible. Universities will, of course, be able to charge candidates for the cost of assessment, in addition to the cost of any CPD courses. In the case of English universities, the fact that these will be assessed HE qualifications may open up the way to HEFCE funding in the form of part-time student numbers.

I would urge you to circulate this information widely amongst your colleagues, not only to those with bio-medical or animal science interests, but also to other relevant departments that may be interested in providing programmes and assessment in areas such as professional and business practice.

I look forward to hearing from you, and hope that your university will feel able to play a full part in this important initiative aimed at improving the lifelong learning opportunities for practising veterinary surgeons.

Yours sincerely



Lynne Hill, MVB, MBA, MRCVS  
President