



Royal Agricultural University

With Plumpton College

Report to the Veterinary Nurses Council of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS)

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## List of Visitors

### **Sally Bowden RVN**

VN representative

### **Miss Ashleigh Burkitt**

Student Representative

### **Donna Cotton**

Employer Representative

### **Julie Dugmore RVN**

Director of Veterinary Nursing

### **Victoria Hedges RVN**

Examinations Manager

## Key Staff met

### Royal Agricultural University

#### **Dr Anne Stevenson MRCVS**

Programme Manager Animal Science; Link Tutor VN Programmes

#### **Prof Neil Ravenscroft**

Head of REALM (Real Estate and Land Management)

#### **Anne Granger**

Academic Registrar

#### **Laura Butler**

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#### **Caro Khamkhami**

Assistant Registrar Quality Assurance

### Plumpton College

#### **Jo Buckley**

Head of Faculty, Animal & Sport

**Georgina Darnell RVN**

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**Beverly Shingleton RVN**

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HE Central Support Manager

**Liz Hobby**

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**Oliver Craig**

HE Quality & Student Experience Officer

## Summary of the Visitors' findings

- The Royal Agricultural University (RAU) and Plumpton College (PC) embarked on a strategic collaborative partnership in 2018 when the RAU took on the validation of the majority of the HE programmes in the Plumpton College portfolio.
- This report is presented to RCVS following the accreditation event for the RAU/Plumpton College licence to practise qualification.
- The visitors received a warm welcome from the staff and are grateful to all those responsible for preparing the self-evaluation report, arranging the schedule and providing supplementary evidence when requested. The enthusiasm, commitment and pride of staff in what they do made it an interesting and enjoyable visit.

The team found the following:

- The programme team is to be **commended** for its ongoing and strong commitment to the continuation of veterinary nurse education and training and for the supportive mechanisms in place with its training practices.
- Plumpton College is to be **commended** for its financial investment in the veterinary nursing provision.
- The teams were open to advice and guidance given by the RCVS visitors.
- The students that the visitors met were, without exception, enthusiastic and articulate about both the programme and Plumpton College staff.

## Standard 1 – Organisation

**A senior member of AO or HEI staff (the official correspondent) responsible for the overall delivery of RCVS-approved licence to practise qualifications, in veterinary nursing, must be designated.**

**Details of the location(s) at which the qualification is to be administered must be provided.**

**Licence to practise qualifications must be accredited by a UK University/HEI or by an AO recognised by the UK national regulatory authorities.**

**Applications must be made by the principal or chief executive of the AO or HEI.**

- 1.1 The licence to practise qualification is administered across two sites:

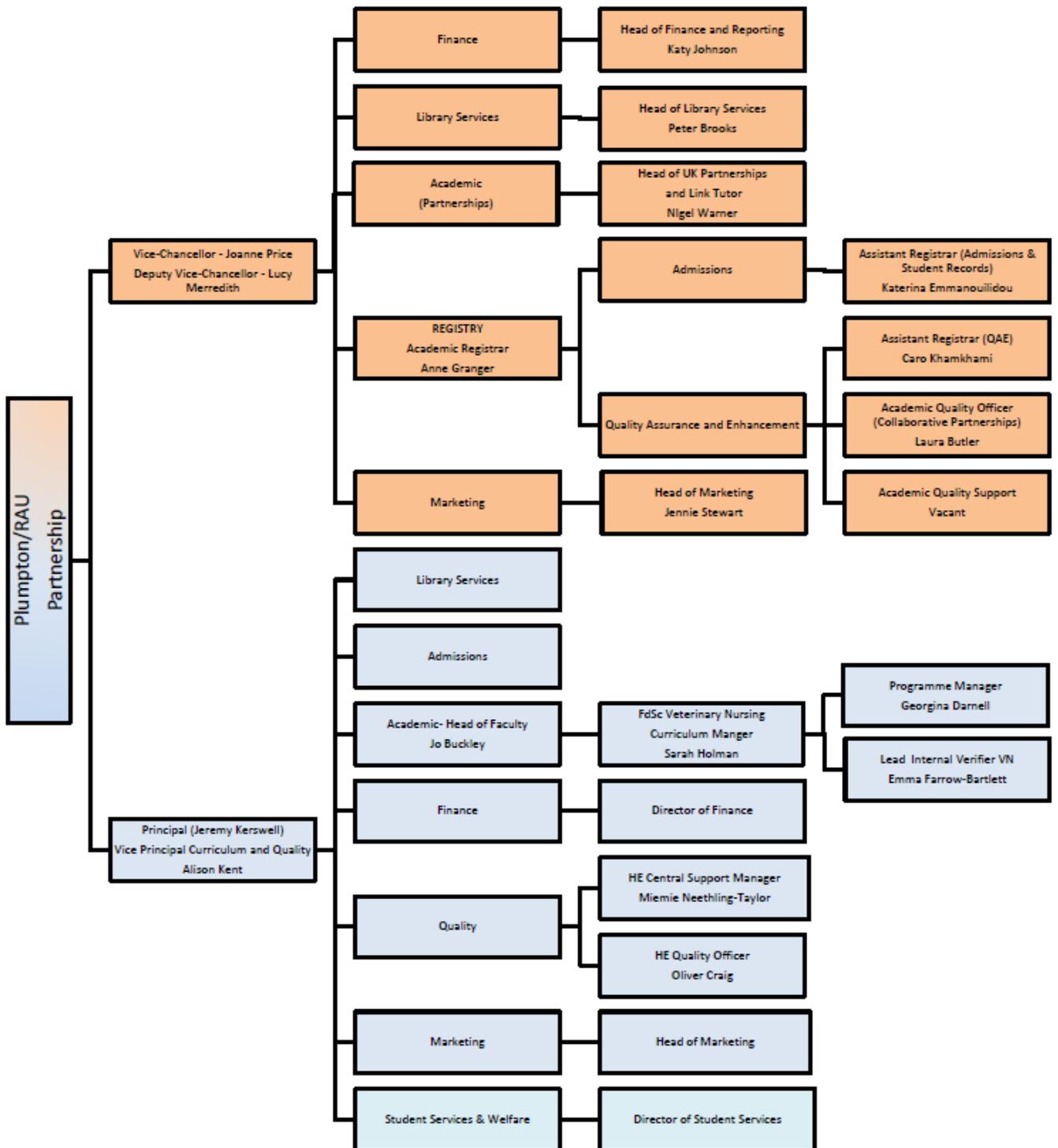
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- 1.2 The completed application has been submitted by Anne Granger, RAU Academic Registrar, in her role as the official correspondent to the RCVS in relation to the licence to practise qualification.
- 1.3 The proposed programme title is FdSc Veterinary Nursing.
- 1.4 Plumpton College and the Royal Agricultural University (RAU) is a new strategic partnership provision. Whilst RAU award and quality assure the qualifications, Plumpton College supplies the niche vocational veterinary nursing expertise and resources.
- 1.5 RAU carried out an institutional review of the veterinary nursing provision and programme validation on 13 February 2019. They recommend that the FdSc Veterinary Nursing programme at Plumpton College be validated for three years from September 2019 until August 2022 subject to a number of conditions being completed by the agreed deadline.
- 1.5 The organisational structure and relationship between RAU and Plumpton College is detailed below.



- 1.5 The Royal Agricultural University (RAU) is also in partnership with Askham Bryan College delivering a FdSc in Veterinary Nursing.

### **Suggestions**

None

### **Actions**

- a. RAU to confirm that all conditions outlined in the institutional review have been met in full.

## Standard 2 – Sustainability

**Finances must be demonstrably adequate to sustain the educational programmes.**

**AOs and HEIs must be able to demonstrate that the delivery of the proposed qualification is cost effective.**

**AOs and HEIs must demonstrate that there is a sufficient need for all new qualification(s).**

- 2.1 The programme manager has oversight of how the budget for veterinary nursing is allocated.
- 2.2 The annual report and financial statements for the year ended 31 July 2018 were submitted. These lacked sufficient detail to determine the viability of the programme. In addition to the information already submitted, the visitors requested the following be considered;
- Guest speaker fees / expenses,
  - Costs associated with IQA activities,
  - Costs associated with the External Examiner,
  - Costs associated with offering free Clinical Coach training and other incentives,
  - Costs associated with employment of 5 lecturers and other support staff,
  - Costs associated with any field trips and transport to and from congresses/conferences,
  - Fees payable to RAU.
- 2.3 It was confirmed that the Veterinary Nursing department is provided with access to the animal collections without charge. Additionally the visitors were informed that the proposed trip to a congress outlined in the Career Development module is an optional activity and will be funded by the students. Plumpton College are however able to get reduced ticket rates. It is not clear that attendance at congress is optional and the potential additional cost to students is not outlined in the student handbook or the Career Development module.
- 2.4 The college partner has been delivering veterinary nurse training since early 2000. The first cohort graduated with the FdSc in 2011. The existing FdSc programme, awarded by University of Brighton, attracts in the region of 80 applications per year. The availability of suitable clinical placements means that a maximum of twelve students per year are recruited.
- 2.5 RAU report that there is scope to increase cohort sizes with a maximum capacity of twenty students by 2020. However, there was no formal market research to support these plans submitted with the application. The visitors were informed that a meeting would be held with Training Practices (TPs) in June 2019 to promote the new programme and encourage more practices to provide placements for FdSc students. It was confirmed that the target audience will be those responsible for recruitment.
- 2.6 In addition, Plumpton College Business Support Team have recruited a specific account manager for the veterinary nursing subject area to market college activities and promote the opportunities to offer work placements for students.

- 2.7 A Training Practice Communication Strategy is in development to support students, clinical coaches and practices.
- 2.8 Plumpton College presented their 7 year strategic plan, the first phase of which includes investment in the expansion of the veterinary nurse clinical skills teaching facility.
- 2.9 The list of Training Practices provided with the application included ninety-five practices affiliated to Plumpton College. However, out of the ninety-five listed, thirty practices currently provide clinical placements for FdSc Veterinary Nursing programme students.

### **Suggestions**

None

### **Actions**

- a. RAU must provide revised financial statements detailing the income and expenditure based on the current cohort size and projections for 2020 when a larger cohort is proposed.
- b. RAU to provide evidence of the June 2019 employer meeting, demonstrating evidence of canvassing/marketing for additional placements.

## Standard 3 – Qualification design and delivery

**Licence to practise qualifications must address the RCVS Day One Competences for Veterinary Nurses and RCVS Day One Skills for Veterinary Nurses and, in the case of HE programmes, relevant benchmark statements.**

**Licence to practise qualifications must contain the minimum Guided Learning Hours (GLH) as defined by the body entrusted for setting GLH for your sector. Prior to registration students must complete 2,990 hours in duration, actively engaged in training (GLH and clinical placement), excluding annual leave and absence.**

**Programmes of study delivered by Centres must incorporate a minimum of 1,800 hours of clinical work experience, to be gained in a veterinary practice registered with the RCVS as a Training Practice (TP) or an Auxiliary Training Practice (aTP). This must be in addition to the GLH as set by the relevant bodies. It is the AO/HEIs responsibility to ensure these requirements are being met.**

**Work-based learning requirements must articulate with the RCVS Day One Skills for Veterinary Nurses and be recorded and assessed in a format that is readily auditable and accessible to students, clinical supervisors and quality assurance personnel.**

**Methods of summative assessment must be detailed within the modules. Assessments need to be valid and reliable and comprise a variety of approaches. Direct assessment of RCVS Day One Skills for Veterinary Nurses must form a significant component of the overall process of assessment.**

- 3.1. The programme manager reported that the new qualification had been developed to ensure graduates have a broad knowledge and understanding of the profession. Three new compulsory modules were proposed. The Career Development module has been designed to provide students with an opportunity to consider the different roles of the veterinary nurse outside clinical practice. The Clinical Nursing Skills module is completed before the student starts their first work placement and covers the areas essential for a student on day one of their placement. The Introduction to Veterinary Practice Management module is to provide the student with a basic knowledge of running a veterinary practice.
- 3.2 The programme specification clearly outlines the structure of the programme, with the clinical placement (outlined below) designed to span across all three years.

	Semester	Weeks (allowing for sickness)	Hours (8 hours a day)	Total hours
Year 1 January – June  @ 8 hours per day, (excluding lunch break)	Semester 2	14 weeks - 3 days per week*	336 hours	<b>Total: 336 hours to be completed</b>
Sandwich year July Year 1 – September Year 3		3 days per week = 24 hours per week* 50 weeks (1 <sup>st</sup> July - 1 <sup>st</sup> Sept allowing for 6 weeks holiday + 2 week placement for Career Development module	1200 hours	<b>Total: 1200 hours</b>
Year 3 September - June	Semester 1  Semester 2	14 weeks – 2 days per week*  14 weeks – 2 days per week*	224 hours  224 hours	<b>Total: 448 hours</b>

3.3 The Course Handbook states,

*“Once you have been accepted onto the FdSc VN course and we have confirmed a work placement, you need to enrol immediately with the RCVS as a student nurse. Student enrolment will be arranged on your first day at Plumpton College during induction”.*

This is a contradictory statement, as the students do not go out to work placements until later in the programme, so presumably do not always have these confirmed when they commence.

3.4 The Programme Specification (3ai) and FdSc VN Handbook (3aii) states:

*'The Plumpton College FdSc Veterinary Nursing Course has been fully accredited by the RCVS and the student will therefore be able to register as a qualified veterinary nurse on successful graduation. This is providing the student has completed the theory, Nursing Progress Log (NPL) (Based on the LANTRA National Occupational Standards), OSCE and Placement hours.'*

*'Full-time students will undertake a range of modules totalling 240 credits over the duration of the programme. Students must achieve a minimum of 120 credits at Level 4 and a further 120 credits at Level 5. The final award is calculated by a 30:70 split between level 4 and level 5 marks.'*

*'The Veterinary Nursing Bye-Laws require students to have completed 1800 hours of practical work experience (voluntary work experience) and produce evidence of DOS, which is based on the National Occupational Standards. Completion of the National Occupational Standards (NPL) is required in order to achieve the RCVS DOS and Day One Competences for veterinary nurses, and additionally an essential component of the FdSc'*

3.5 These statements contain a number of inaccuracies:

- Plumpton College has never been accredited by RCVS to award the degree.
- The programme is a new offering by RAU and therefore will be provisionally accredited until the first cohort has graduated and the RCVS is satisfied that the RCVS accreditation standards have been met in full.
- The word 'qualified' should be removed because the term 'veterinary nurse' in this context presumes that an individual is qualified.
- The Nursing Progress Log (NPL) is not based on the Lantra National Occupational Standards. The RCVS require all nurses to be assessed against the RCVS Day One Skills for veterinary nurses. The NPL is a suitable tool created to record assessment of RCVS Day One Skills.
- The statement would lead the reader to believe that a student can graduate but would not be able to register unless they also completed the theory (sic), NPL, OSCE and placement hours. As all of these elements must be completed in order to achieve the FdSc, graduation is not even possible without these elements first being completed.
- The Veterinary Nursing Byelaws were replaced with the Registration Rules a number of years ago.

3.6 The section in the Handbook (3a) on the Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs) appears to only relate to the examination in the final year and not the one in the first year. The visitors felt there was insufficient information for students regarding the passing standard (see also Standard 5, point 5.1 of this report)

3.7 Students registered for the qualification with provisional approval currently have no means of being informed of the accreditation status.

3.8 There is reference to the QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Veterinary Nursing within the Programme Specification, however, it is unclear how the programme meets Benchmark

Statement 3.3 with respect to endemic UK wildlife and exotic species not commonly seen in the UK.

- 3.9 The programme design includes thirteen mandatory modules- ten at 15 credits and three at 30 credits. Included in the design are two 15 credit mandatory modules. Students identified as likely to achieve the FdSc will complete the Veterinary Anaesthesia module. Those identified as unlikely to achieve will sit the Applied Animal Behaviour Management module instead and on successful completion of 240 credits will be awarded the FdSc Animal Health Studies.
- 3.10 In addition, the requirement for students to complete the mandatory work placement, assessment of RCVS Day One Skills and the final Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) is currently outwith a module. This means that someone who completes 240 credits including the Anaesthesia module could feasibly be awarded the FdSc Veterinary Nursing without completing the work placement, RCVS Day One Skills and OSCE and would therefore be unable to apply to register with the RCVS. It is not permissible to award a qualification with Veterinary Nursing in the title unless it leads to registration.
- 3.11 The RCVS Code of Professional Conduct (COPC) appears to be covered in one module, rather than being considered in conjunction with a range of topics related to nursing practice.
- 3.12 A module mapping document is included within the student handbook which clearly shows how the RCVS Day One Competences for Veterinary Nursing (DOC) and the RCVS Day One Skills for Veterinary Nursing (DOS) are addressed, however, there is no referencing to the DOC and DOS within the module handbooks.
- 3.13 Module feedback:

For the Veterinary Anatomy and Physiology module (L4, 30 credits), 60 hours teaching time seems quite low, given the subject matter and volume of material.

On the Study and Research Skills module (L4, 15 credits) the FdSc Veterinary Nursing is not listed on the RAU module description sheet as a course to which this module belongs.

The Animal Health and Husbandry module (L4, 15 credits) requires students to *“Demonstrate and evaluate appropriate handling, restraint and transport of a variety of species and justify methods used”*. However, there is no practical assessment for this module.

The Clinical Nursing module (L4 15 credits) states in the module description, *“ The module is designed to build on the knowledge and practical skills learned in Introduction to Clinical Nursing”*. However, there is no module with this title.

The Clinical Nursing module (L4 15 credits) Outcome 3 states, *“Demonstrate practical application of animal first aid, patient resuscitation and preparation of emergency equipment and facilities”*. However, there is no practical assessment for this module.

The Clinical Nursing Skills module (L4 15 credits) and the similarly titled Clinical Nursing module (L4 15 credits) could be confused by students, particularly as they are both Level 4, 15 credit modules.

The Introduction to Veterinary Practice Management module (L4 15 credits) states that students are required to, “*Demonstrate the maintenance of specific areas of the veterinary premises, including identification of risks, hazards, commonly used equipment and the supply and safe storage of veterinary materials and medicines.*” However, there is no practical element to the assessment for this module.

The Introduction to Veterinary Practice Management module (L4 15 credits) also includes an outcome related to ethical, legal and professional regulatory frameworks. As previously stated in 3.10, the grouping of this subject matter into one area denies the students the opportunity to explore the meaning of these frameworks in context.

In addition to this, the number of contact hours seems to be low for such a module, where legislative requirements and procedures feature so heavily. The Clinical Placement information in the student handbook (page 18) details a clinical placement module at level 4 and level 5. It appears that the clinical placement requirements sit outwith any of the modules and as such, do not carry any credit. It is unclear therefore, how the academic level of these placements has been determined. Furthermore, it appears to be possible that a student could achieve sufficient credits to graduate, yet have failed to successfully undertake the clinical placement aspect of the programme.

The Career Development module includes the need for students to, “attend 2 days of guest speaker talks either within college or at a congress setting” It was established that both the guest speaker and congress options would be available, but this is not clear from the statement in the module outline. In addition, the assessment did not seem congruent with other 15 credit module

The practical element of the Career Development module requires students to spend 2 weeks in an alternative setting. This may or may not be a TP. In the event that it is not a TP, the hours cannot be counted towards the total number of hours worked in such a setting in order to apply to the Register. This might render the applicant short of the required 1800 hours.

The Independent Enquiry module (L5 15 credits) - the FdSc Veterinary Nursing is not listed on the RAU module description sheet as a course to which this module belongs. There does not appear to be any practical element of assessment for the Veterinary Diagnostics module (L5 30 credits).

The Medical and Critical Care Nursing module (L5 30 credits)- Learning Outcome 3 contains practical skills that are not being directly assessed. There is a requirement for case studies, but the module outline specifies that there is no work based learning, so it is unclear where the evidence for the case studies will be generated and whether they are cases the students are involved with directly, or whether they are pre-designed.

The Surgical and Theatre Nursing module (L5 15 credits) – despite the practical nature of the subject matter, the learning outcomes are not practical and so will not assess the students’ skills in this area.

The Veterinary Practice Management module (L5 15 credits) and the similarly titled Introduction to Veterinary Practice Management module (L4 15 credits) could be confused by students,

The Veterinary Anaesthesia module (L5 15 credits)- Learning Outcome 3 contains practical skills that are not being directly assessed. There is a requirement for a case study, but the module outline specifies that there is no work based learning, so it is unclear where the evidence for the case studies

will be generated and whether they are cases the students are involved with directly, or whether they are pre-designed.

- 3.14 Two versions of each module outline were submitted. One version is the official University version and the other is for the students. The module codes and name of module leaders were missing from both versions. There is no reference to the Day One Skills and Day One Competences for Veterinary Nurses.
- 3.15 The Plumpton College Training Practice Approval and Quality Assurance Guidance appears to relate to Level 3 Diploma students with respect to initial TP approval. Appendix 4.2 refers to practices not affiliated to Plumpton College wishing to provide clinical placements for a FdSc veterinary Nursing student.

## Suggestions

- a. It is advisable that students are enrolled with the RCVS immediately they enrol for the FdSc, rather than waiting for the work placement to be confirmed. Any delay in enrolling may have a knock-on effect with the students failing to meet the RCVS Registration Rules upon graduation.
- b. Reference to the Day One Skills and Day One Competences would enhance the student version of the module outlines.
- c. The COPC should be considered across all clinical modules to ensure that student veterinary nurses consider how their behaviour inside and outside of veterinary practice will impact their career and develop a sound understanding and practical application of the Code, plus good reflective habits in the general course of their practice, rather than just at discrete junctures.
- d. Consideration should be given to the number of teaching hours for some of the modules with a heavy theoretical content.
- e. Consideration should be given to the module titles to ensure clarity and avoid confusion for students.

## Actions

- a. A letter must be sent to students detailing the accreditation status and warning them that additional assessment, in the form of the RCVS pre-registration examination, may be required prior to them applying to enter the register. The contents of the letter must be approved by the RCVS. The University must also clarify that the programme is subject to accreditation by the RCVS on all marketing materials.
- b. RAU to review and revise the Training Practice Approval and Quality Assurance Guidance to ensure relevance to the RAU FdSc veterinary nursing programme.
- c. RAU to proof read and amend the programme specification and all programme handbooks to ensure that areas identified in this report are amended throughout.
- d. RAU to ensure the module codes and names of module leaders are added to the module outlines.
- e. RAU to review the module structure, weighting and learning outcome descriptors used, with particular reference to the areas identified in this report.
- f. RAU to review all modules and ensure appropriate methods of assessment are utilised and referenced correctly on the assessment map within the Programme Specification.

- g. The University must confirm the mechanisms in place to ensure that a student is not able to graduate without completing the registration requirements outlined in the RCVS Registration Rules.
- h. The University must ensure that final versions of all validated modules are provided to the RCVS.

## Standard 4 – Qualification quality management

**AOs and HEIs must be compliant with all criteria stipulated by their accrediting national regulatory authority.**

**Student selection criteria must be in place including the minimal acceptable qualifications to be achieved prior to commencing the qualification. The number of students registered for the qualification must be consistent with the resources available including the availability of sufficient Training Practices to enable the required clinical experience to be undertaken**

**AOs and HEIs must allow the RCVS access to people, premises and records relevant to the management and delivery of the accredited qualification, and must cooperate with RCVS quality assurance activities in relation to the delivery and assessment of such qualification(s).**

**AOs and HEIs must employ sufficient suitably qualified staff to administer and quality assure the qualification(s).**

**Quality assurance personnel must demonstrate, maintain and provide evidence to RCVS of relevant occupational and academic competence in relation to the evaluation of assessment materials and decisions.**

- 4.1 RAU is registered with the Office for Students with no specific conditions of registration imposed. In June 2017, RAU was awarded a Silver Teaching and Excellence Framework (TEF) score which is valid for three years.
- 4.2 Plumpton College was last inspected by Ofsted in February 2018 and the overall effectiveness was deemed "Good".
- 4.3 Entry requirements consist of:
- 5 GCSEs A-C/Grade 4 or above to include Mathematics, English Language and a Science,
  - 64 UCAS tariff points. This can be made of either A-levels, BTEC national diploma or a HE Access course and must include elements of science, specifically Biology or Anatomy and Physiology.
- In addition to the above, students must demonstrate fitness to practise and declare any criminal convictions. Students are also required to have completed a minimum of four weeks work experience, two of which must be in a UK veterinary practice and two in another animal-related field. All students are interviewed. There does not appear to be a requirement for a satisfactory reference from the work experience placements.
- 4.4 CVs and CPD for teaching and support staff were provided. There was no RAU CPD policy or procedure included with the application. The Plumpton College VNs CPD policy was

relevant to RCVS Professional CPD obligations only and does not include teaching, assessing or quality assurance CPD requirements.

- 4.5 It is not clear, from the submitted TP visit spreadsheet, when quality monitoring activity actually occurred. The TP Resource and Actions Report clearly documents any TP actions required. However, the majority do not appear to have been reviewed or signed off as completed.
- 4.6 The external examiner is likely to be the one that is currently appointed by the University of Brighton / Plumpton College. RAU are in the process of confirming this.

### Suggestions

- a. Include in the entry requirements the need for a satisfactory reference from the work experience placements.

### Actions

- a. RAU to confirm the details of the external examiner and provide their CV and CPD records for last three years, along with a copy of their memorandum of understanding / contract.
- b. Update the visit spreadsheet to detail the quality monitoring activity that has occurred.
- c. CPD for teaching and support staff to be resubmitted with records of CPD undertaken in relation their teaching and quality assurance roles.
- d. RAU to provide its CPD policy

## Standard 5 – Assessment

Qualification assessment strategies must be appropriate, valid and fair. A pass must be achieved in each assessment assessing the RCVS Day One Competences for Veterinary Nurses and RCVS Day One Skills for Veterinary Nurses.

Reasonable adjustment, mitigating circumstances, fitness to practise policies and an appeals procedure must be in place, taking into account the licence to practise requirement for all students to achieve all competences contained in the RCVS Day One Competences for Veterinary Nurses and RCVS Day One Skills for Veterinary Nurses.

Mechanisms must be in place to allow Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) to be taken into consideration.

Appropriate security arrangements must be in place to safeguard the integrity of assessment processes.

The design and quality assurance of assessments must be carried out by personnel who are specifically qualified to execute these functions.

There must be procedures in place to maximise the fairness, validity and reliability of assessment outcomes, including but not limited to academic peer review of assessment content, proofing of scripts, supervision and invigilation, maintenance of records and moderation processes.

There must be appropriate moderation processes in place to ensure parity within and between individual units of study, across the programme, with other institutions; and to ensure that each student is fairly treated.

All modules or units of a qualification that address the RCVS Day One Competences for Veterinary Nurses and RCVS Day One Skills for Veterinary Nurses must include unseen independent examination as an element of the assessment strategy.

Independently assessed Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE), or a similarly robust, objective and evidence-based form of examination, must be employed to test the safe and effective acquisition of clinical skills.

Practical assessment must be carried out by individuals who are specifically qualified to evaluate practical skills and performance, and who have sufficient occupational experience and qualifications to support safe and effective judgements of clinical competence.

5.1 The programme specification states:

*“In order to pass the OSCE examinations, the student is required to pass 8 out of 12 practical stations. The student’s practical skills will be examined using OSCE (Objectively Structured Clinical Examination style) procedures of consecutive practical exam stations. Additionally the OSCE assessments will examine theoretical knowledge and understanding by creating work stations with possible scenarios, questions and calculations for the students to solve. The students will rotate through the exam stations completing and answering the questions and the examiners will mark the practical responses against an OSCE assessment grade sheet.”*

These statements appear to only relate to the OSCE in the third year and not the practical assessments in the first year. In addition, there are a number of inaccuracies:

- OSCE is a recognised acronym for Objective Structured Clinical Examination, rather than, “*Objectively...*” as stated in the documentation.
- It is unclear what the difference is between ‘OSCE’ and ‘OSCE style’,
- It is unclear how the creation of work stations with possible scenarios, questions and calculations for students to solve, assesses theoretical knowledge and understanding.

5.2 Procedures and processes for marking and moderation of assignments and examinations are clearly outlined in the RAU Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes document (4b). It is unclear if these also include the work based assessment and practical examination. It was confirmed that the external examiner would be expected to audit the NPL and the OSCEs.

5.3 An appeals process is in place. This is detailed in the RAU Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes document (4b). The Course Handbook (3a) has a section titled ‘Plumpton College Appeals Procedure’. It is unclear if this differs from the RAU appeals procedure.

5.4 RAU has in place a code for conduct for examinations. This outlines the roles and responsibilities for the personnel involved with the administration of the examination along with procedures for managing the examination room.

5.5 Plumpton College provided their Objective Structured Clinical Examination Protocol. This has insufficient detail to allow someone with little previous knowledge of the examination format to be able to deliver or audit the examination.

5.6 A marking rubric is available for marking assignments. This rubric clearly shows the difference between someone who is competent and someone who is not yet competent. It is unclear whether similar mechanisms are in place to ensure that the same distinction can be made about the examinations.

5.7 Examples of examination materials were provided on the day. These generally consisted of a section with Multiple Choice test items (MCQs), followed by a section of short answer test items.

- 5.8 There is concern that the level 4 and 5 examinations resembled those of the Level 3 Diploma. In addition, there was poor practice seen in the construction of MCQs .
- 5.9 A comprehensive external examiner handbook was provided.

## Suggestions

None

## Actions

- a. OSCE is an acronym for Objective Structured Clinical Examination. The word 'Objectively' should therefore be amended. In addition, the difference is between 'OSCE' and 'OSCE style' must be clarified.
- b. The practical assessment method used on the first year module/s must be outlined and ensure this is clear in the Programme Specification and Course Handbook.
- c. RAU need to provide the RCVS with both examiner and student guidance documents, providing clarity that the RAU Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes applies to the work based assessment and practical examinations.
- d. The correct appeals procedure must be identified and clearly signposted in the course documents.
- e. RAU must ensure that its OSCE policies and procedures are up to date. These should be written in such a way that anyone with little previous knowledge of the examination format would be able to deliver the examination, from the planning stage through to results. Inclusion of the following will improve the existing document:

1. The design of the examination:
  - The examination blueprint - blueprinting to the RCVS Day One Skills / Day One Competences
  - Information on the process of pairing the OSCE station to the examiner
  - Eligibility rules / prerequisites for students entering the examination
  - The contents of the examiner and student briefings in the form of scripts
  - Information on monitoring timely completion (6 minutes) of each OSCE station
  - Description of student movement through the circuit of OSCE stations (from arrival at the centre, entering the station, leaving the station, comfort breaks, unusual occurrences, e.g. becoming unwell etc.)
2. Details on how and when results will be conveyed to the student.
3. Quality assurance mechanisms:
  - Information on sampling of examiner marking
  - Mechanisms for reducing examiner bias
  - Observation of examiners for quality assurance
  - Details of statistical analysis of results
  - Description of external examiner involvement

- Review of examiner reports and how these will be used to improve the station or review the marks given
  - Analysis of student performance and any resulting reports. (Were there any steps which appear to have been performed poorly by a number of students? Was the pass rate for some of the stations lower than expected?).
4. Standard setting (setting the pass mark):
- Instructions detailing how and when OSCE stations will be written and trialed
  - Details of review of existing OSCE stations after the examination to ensure that they remain suitable, including personnel responsible for this process
  - How the decision to pass/fail is made
  - Justification for not assessing some areas of the Day One Skills and Day One Competences in the examination
  - Setting of the pass mark, including personnel involved and the timing and frequency of this activity
  - Application of validation processes employed to ensure that those who pass the examination are competent and those who do not pass the exam are not yet competent
  - Details on how examiners award marks and where the marks and results are recorded
  - Details on other features of the exam, such as how essential steps are decided
5. Security
- Storage and transfer details of materials to ensure security
6. Examiner manual and candidate guidance:
- Details of the personnel involved in the administration, organisation and delivery of the examination. This should include information about roles and responsibilities, minimum requirements and the training and standardisation they will receive.
- f. RAU to Provide exemplar examination materials, demonstrating well-designed test items. For example, the use of options such as, "all of the above" or, "none of the above" must be avoided in MCQs etc. The course team should also ensure that the questions pass the 'cover test', i.e. students should be able to answer the question while covering the options.

## Standard 6 – Centre approval and quality assurance

**Centres/delivery sites approved for the delivery of the accredited qualification must address the requirements for personnel, resources and facilities stipulated within the RCVS Standards and procedures for the approval and monitoring of Centres.**

**AOs and HEIs must conduct a site visit, including an audit of facilities and resources, before approving any Centre/delivery site to deliver a licence to practise qualification.**

**AOs and HEIs must conduct a minimum of one site visit to each approved Centre/delivery site and/or its affiliated Training Practices, annually, based on a documented risk assessment policy.**

**Centres delivering a licence to practise qualification must be notified to the RCVS.**

**AOs and HEIs must set in place binding agreements with Centres that articulate both their national and professional regulatory obligations.**

- 6.1 At the time of the submission, the University policy detailing Centre compliance with RCVS standards and procedures for the approval and monitoring of Centres was not included. The University confirmed that they had undertaken visits to the Centre and TPs and that these would be carried out annually.
- 6.2 The TP handbook focusses on the Level 3 Diploma with a small portion relating to the FdSc.
- 6.3 It was clear from the TPs visited that Plumpton College are very supportive. However, it was not clear from the document provided, how quality monitoring is adjusted in line with risk banding.

### Suggestions

- a. Consider developing two Training Practice Handbooks; one for the FdSc and one for the Level 3 Diploma, or increase the FdSc content of the current handbook

### Actions

- a. RAU to provide their written policy on the management of Centres and TPs delivering RCVS accredited qualifications, to include risk banding.
- b. TP resource checklist and action documents must be updated and provided to the RCVS to demonstrate that TP actions are being monitored.

## Standard 7 – Self evaluation and reporting

**AOs and HEIs must evaluate the delivery of a licence to practise qualification across all approved Centres and provide a report to the RCVS annually or when otherwise required to do so.**

7.1 Included in the application submission was a proforma of the intended external examiner report. This proforma does not appear to require the external examiner to quality monitor or report on the summative (OSCE) examination.

### Suggestions

- a. Include OSCE monitoring and reporting within the external examiner report.

### Actions

None

# University response

*Response from RAU regarding the quality assurance report.*

Action	AO/HEI response	Action by whom	Date for resolution

