

University of London

Royal Veterinary College (RVC)

**Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing
Accreditation Visit**

September 2020

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

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List of Visitors

Emma Anscombe-Skirrow RVN - Industry Representative

Denise Chambers RVN - RCVS Quality Assurance Officer

Katherine Kissick RVN (Chair of RCVS Panel) - Employer Representative

Katherine Lovewell RVN - Student Representative

Key Staff met

Nicola Barker - Programme Support Coordinator

Adrian Boswood MRCVS - Vice-Principal Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Veronica Brewster - Module Leader, Contemporary Study Skills

Emma Burchfield - Academic Registrar

Niamh Clancy RVN - Module Leader, Anaesthesia & Analgesia

Barbara Glanemann MRCVS - Module Leader, Medical Nursing

Sue Gregory MRCVS - Professor of Veterinary Nursing

Elena Hernandez-Martin - Learning Design Manager

Karen Humm MRCVS - Deputy Module Leader, Emergency & Critical Care

Cheryl Jackson - Academic Quality Manager

Marie Jones RVN - Deputy Module Leader, Medical Nursing

Matt Lee - Assistant Director of Finance

Anette Loeffler MRCVS - Deputy Chair of Exam Board

Christina Maden RVN - Deputy Module Leader, Surgical Nursing

Imelda McGonnell - Acting Vice-Principal Students

Rob Noad - Deputy Chair of Teaching Quality Committee

Evelyn O'Byrne RVN - Module Leader, Emergency & Critical Care

Amanda Rosier - Deputy Module Leader, Contemporary Study Skills

John Sanger - Head of Examinations

Richard Sherry - Collaborative Programmes Officer, Secretary to the RVC Cert AVN panel

Steven Van Winden MRCVS - Chair of Course Management Committee & Associate Dean Undergraduate Teaching and Learning

Kata Veres-Nyeki MRCVS - Deputy Module Leader, Anaesthesia & Analgesia

Perdi Welsh RVN - Course Director

Evie Yon RVN - Deputy Module Leader, Fundamentals in Advanced Veterinary Nursing; Module Leader, Surgical Nursing

Summary of the Visitors' findings

- An online accreditation meeting was held between The Royal Veterinary College (RVC) and the RCVS on 3 September 2020. The RVC applied to the RCVS for accreditation of the following programmes:

Graduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing

Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing

- It was not feasible for a site visit to take place due to the ongoing health and safety risk of Covid-19, and the Visitors are grateful to the RVC participants for their involvement in the online event which was attended by all relevant RVC staff.

The team found the following:

- The RVC is to be **commended** for the increased use of veterinary nurses and the wide range of staff knowledge and skills used in the development and delivery of the proposed programme, and its commitment to advancing the status of the profession.
- The RVC is to be **commended** for the level of support for distance-learning students, such as the support helpline, which has been carefully considered and built into the structure of each course, and the wide variety of means by which student feedback is sought and acted upon.
- **Areas for further review** include a decision on whether to move all content to online only provision and a review of the learning outcomes to ensure they are set at an appropriate level for the proposed programme.

The findings in this report are based on the RCVS panel's review. The panel are not the decision makers and their commendations, suggestions and actions may be subject to amendment during the committee process.

Standard 1 – Organisation and Course Overview

Awarding University or Organisation and details of the proposed qualification.

Standard part met	
Accredited education institutions must:	
Requirement	Details
University or Awarding Organisation	<p>University of London Senate House Malet Street London WC1E 7HU</p> <p>Royal Veterinary College Hawkshead Lane North Mymms Hatfield Hertfordshire AL9 7TA</p>
Name and Qualifications of Course Organiser	Perdi Welsh BSc (Hons), DipAVN (Surg), PCCertEd, RVN
Proposed programme(s) title:	<p>Graduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing (GradCertAVN)</p> <p>Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing (PGCert AVN)</p>
Pattern of delivery	One year, part-time, delivered via online distance or blended learning
Intakes and student numbers	One intake per year, 20 students per annum.
<p>Conclusion:</p> <p>The proposed programme delivery is well planned and is achievable within the proposed timeframe.</p> <p>The proposed student numbers are reflective of current capacity on the existing RVC Graduate Diploma programme.</p>	

The visitors identified that the programme offers the opportunity for the recruitment of international students but found that clarity is required on whether the proposed pattern of delivery is blended learning or is delivered solely as an online course. The current proposal may deter students who live a distance from the delivery site and are unclear on the mandatory components of their chosen programme.

Suggestions

None.

Actions

- a. Provide clarification on when student attendance on campus is compulsory or optional, or whether compulsory face-to-face elements of the programme will be available online for domestic and international students.

Standard 2 – Sustainability

Provide strong evidence of an adequate and sustainable market for the proposed qualification backed up by sound research based evidence.

Standard part met			
Accredited education institutions must:			
Requirement	Met	Part Met	Not Met
<p>Clearly report finances and budget specific to the qualification leading to award of the RCVS Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing</p> <p><i>Evidence reviewed:</i> <i>Financial Appraisal and Additional Commentary</i> <i>New Programme Approval form excerpt (Nov 19)</i></p> <p>RVC is committed financially and academically to delivering courses to provide ongoing progression for nurses from a range of academic backgrounds.</p> <p>The proposed programme reflects the existing RVC Graduate Diploma modules which have demonstrated a high level of demand and are financially viable.</p> <p>The RVC states that all elective optional modules will be offered each year with a minimum of five students required on each module.</p> <p>The opportunity for the modules to be offered to BSc students in their elective module, or as non-assessed CPD courses, ensures financial viability.</p>	✓		

<p>Proactively identify and act on areas for improvement, regularly measuring programme performance and outcomes</p> <p><i>Evidence reviewed:</i> <i>Financial Appraisal and Additional Commentary</i> <i>New Programme Approval form excerpt</i> <i>AQAEP Monitoring and Review of Courses</i> <i>AQI Report Graduate Diploma in Veterinary Nursing 2018-19</i> <i>Access and participation plan</i> <i>Module Review and Student Feedback Survey MN 2017-18</i> <i>Module Review and Student Feedback Survey EBVN 2017-18</i> <i>Entry routes and study pathways</i></p> <p>The documents supplied demonstrate the wide range of methods utilised by RVC in order to obtain stakeholder feedback and the proactive use of this information to effect positive change. It was noted that employer feedback rates are poor and methods to improve response rates were discussed.</p> <p>The programme offers the opportunity for the recruitment of international students if online delivery is used.</p> <p>The RVC states that students are allocated a £10 printing allowance which can be used for printing copies of course documentation during orientation days. An alternative means of accessing this allowance should be considered if delivery moves to solely online methods.</p> <p>The selection and acceptance of students is not well documented, and the panel agreed that the application form may require some alterations and additions to embrace these new programmes. Should there be strong interest the RVC has confirmed that it would look to put additional teaching resources in place.</p> <p>The panel were unable to find evidence of the measures undertaken by the RVC to encourage under-represented groups to apply for the programme and details of these measures are required.</p>		✓	
<p>Conclusion:</p> <p>The RVC is committed to lifelong learning for the veterinary nursing profession and has, to date, had a successful postgraduate advanced nursing programme. The panel agreed that the RVC approach to infilling BSc Veterinary Nursing students and / or CPD students where recruitment figures allow is a suitable approach to ensuring financial viability of the programme.</p> <p>This is an experienced awarding institution which listens carefully to student and stakeholder feedback and instigates programme and modular level changes to meet the needs of the students. Highly specialised and experienced staff lead the modules.</p>			

The RVC states that support for these programmes will be from repeat practices, however, there is now an opportunity to use the online / blended learning delivery of an advanced nursing course with a clinical bias as a unique selling point for new practices from further afield who wish to participate.

Suggestions

- a. Consideration to be given to alternative means of accessing the £10 printing allowance per student if these programmes are delivered completely online.
- b. Contact employers with the employer survey before students complete the course to attempt to improve response rates.

Actions

- a. Provide a detailed approach to demonstrate how the RVC is encouraging underrepresented groups in veterinary nursing to enrol on the proposed programmes.

Standard 3 – Curricula and Assessment

Curricula and assessments are designed, developed, delivered and evaluated to ensure candidates achieve the RCVS Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing

Standard part met			
Accredited education institutions must ensure:			
Requirement	Met	Part Met	Not Met
<p>Curricula to remain relevant in respect of veterinary nursing</p> <p><i>Evidence reviewed:</i></p> <p><i>Module specifications</i></p> <p><i>Schemes of Work for all modules</i></p> <p><i>RVC process of monitoring and review of courses</i></p> <p><i>RVC procedure for design and approval of courses</i></p> <p><i>AQAEP Monitoring and Review of Courses</i></p> <p><i>Academic Committee Handbook 2019-20</i></p> <p>The proposed programmes offer two compulsory modules and four elective optional modules:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contemporary Study Skills (Compulsory pre-requisite module) • Fundamentals in Advanced Veterinary Nursing Practice (Compulsory) • Anaesthesia & Analgesia (Elective optional module) 		✓	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency & Critical Care (Elective optional module) • Medical Nursing (Elective optional module) • Surgical Nursing (Elective optional module) <p>All modules are relevant to veterinary nursing and the module content was found to be suitable and current.</p> <p>The medical and surgical modular content is of considerable size, however, the RVC states that feedback from module leaders has been used to increase delivery time from 12 weeks per module in the current postgraduate programme, to 27 weeks per designation pathway in the proposed programme and so the content is deemed to be achievable.</p> <p>Despite identifying the need for more specialisms in the veterinary nursing profession, the RVC states that initially the broader subjects such as medical and surgical nursing are more appropriate to course viability and the expertise available to the RVC. The development of more specialisms may be explored again in the future.</p> <p>The use of Bloom's taxonomy in the learning outcomes was felt to be at a level not appropriate to a level 6 or 7 programme and it is unclear how some of the learning outcomes go above and beyond what is required for a veterinary nursing licence to practise qualification and should be reviewed. The level 7 use of Bloom's taxonomy is generally applied appropriately; however, it is not always clear that there is currently sufficient opportunity to stretch and challenge students on the PGCert AVN pathway.</p>			
<p>Curricula and assessment weigh theory and practice learning appropriately to the programme</p> <p><i>Evidence reviewed:</i> <i>Module specifications</i> <i>Schemes of Work</i> <i>RVC process of monitoring and review of courses</i> <i>RVC procedure for design and approval of courses</i> <i>Assessment design and quality assurance procedure summary</i> <i>AQAEP Monitoring and Review of Courses</i> <i>Academic Committee Handbook 2019-20</i></p> <p>The theory content is sufficient in depth and is linked to practical scenarios and patient assessments. Students are encouraged to critically analyse and reflect on their practical nursing care, with level 7 students demonstrating implementation of the changes discussed.</p> <p>The proposed formative assessments provide the opportunity for peer assessment and the sharing of good practice.</p>	✓		

<p>Proposed summative assessment methods are mainly written assignments with some variation, including problem-based scenarios and extended case studies, and are fit for purpose.</p> <p>While the RVC states that the format of proposed assessments is designed to encourage the publication of case reports, it may wish to consider incorporating alternative innovative forms of summative assessment into future assessment strategies in order to provide students with other relevant skills upon completion.</p> <p>The publication of work could additionally be incorporated into future learning outcomes.</p> <p>The seven-week contemporary study skills module contains a number of credits that are a prerequisite for all students who wish to undertake the course. Whilst the credits are not part of the final qualification, the RVC states that successful students are awarded the credits and may either progress onto the course or decide not to.</p>			
<p>Curricula are developed and evaluated by suitably experienced and qualified educators and/or practitioners who are accountable for ensuring the curriculum incorporates relevant programme outcomes</p> <p><i>Evidence reviewed:</i></p> <p><i>Table 1: staff responsible for developing the proposed qualification</i></p> <p><i>RVC procedure for monitoring delivery and assessment</i></p> <p><i>RVC process of monitoring and review of courses</i></p> <p><i>RVC procedure for design and approval of courses</i></p> <p><i>AQAEP Monitoring and Review of Courses</i></p> <p><i>Academic Committee Handbook 2019-20</i></p> <p><i>RVC Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement Procedures (list)</i></p> <p>The entry requirements in the programme overview document need amendment to clearly indicate that candidates must be on the RCVS VN Register in order to achieve the RCVS CertAVN award.</p> <p>There is evidence throughout the documentation of highly qualified staff involved in both the development and proposed delivery of the course. Each module includes a veterinary surgeon and RVN involved in the teaching and delivery of the course, which includes clinical educators from the onsite hospital. All staff including clinical educators have, or are working towards, a Postgraduate Certificate in Veterinary Education. Processes required for course development are robust and are evidenced throughout.</p> <p>Copies of the external advisor's and external examiner's reports were not available and are to be submitted.</p>		✓	

<p>Curricula are structured and sequenced to enable students to manage their theory and practice learning experience effectively</p> <p><i>Evidence reviewed:</i> <i>Schemes of Work</i> <i>Detailed plan of delivery for the qualifications</i></p> <p>These courses have been carefully considered and feedback from previous students is considered to ensure popular modules are further developed within the new programmes.</p> <p>Optional modules are structured to build on experience as the course progresses. Students completing this programme will be well prepared to effect change within their practices.</p> <p>Clarification is required in the course documentation to specify whether progression is possible from the GradCert AVN to a PGCert AVN in the same elective module designation.</p> <p>Student handbooks were not available for these programmes. The RVC explains that these are available online and a copy or access is to be provided.</p> <p>Optional practical clinical enhancement days at The Queen Mother Hospital for Animals are available to students. The optional days are not linked to any assessments. Students are required to consider cases seen in practice for summative assessments.</p>		✓	
<p>Moderation processes are in place</p> <p><i>Evidence reviewed:</i> <i>Internal Examiner and Assessor procedure summary</i> <i>External Examiner procedure summary</i> <i>Assessment design and quality assurance procedure summary</i> <i>Review of exam question performance procedure summary</i></p> <p>The moderation procedures evidenced are appropriate and fit for purpose.</p>	✓		
<p>Assessment and moderation is fair, reliable and valid</p> <p><i>Evidence reviewed:</i> <i>RVC procedure for design and approval of courses</i> <i>Internal Examiner and Assessor procedure summary</i> <i>Assessment design and quality assurance procedure summary</i> <i>Review of exam question performance procedure summary</i> <i>Reasonable adjustment, academic misconduct, fitness to practise, complaints and appeals procedures summary</i></p>		✓	

<p>It is unclear how the assessments map to the learning outcomes and a mapping document is to be submitted.</p> <p>The panel agreed that the use of peer learning, and the development of formative assessments that mirror the summative assessment methods is to be commended.</p> <p>The assessment strategies are designed in a format to encourage the publication of case reports. The promotion of veterinary nurse created publications is a highly desirable future outcome, although some alternative and innovative assessment strategies may be considered for inclusion in future iterations of the programme.</p> <p>The use of online examinations should be further explored, with emphasis on online examination proctoring procedures. Clarification is required on the procedure for online assessments to ensure adequate invigilation and password protected papers with strict policies for off campus examination procedures.</p> <p>Both level 6 and level 7 course and assessment requirements and extension activities are contained together in most of the programme information and it is difficult to differentiate between the requirements for the two levels. Separation of the information is recommended for clarity.</p>			
<p>Adjustments are provided in accordance with relevant equalities and human rights legislation for all assessments</p> <p><i>Evidence reviewed:</i> <i>Reasonable adjustment, academic misconduct, fitness to practise, complaints and appeals procedure summary</i></p> <p>Comprehensive policies and procedures are evidenced, and appropriate support and adjustments are made where required.</p> <p>There is evidence throughout that the course is designed to provide access and support to those candidates with little or no higher education experience.</p> <p>Pastoral support both on site and online is extensive and provides a variety of support mechanisms in the form of weekly discussion forums, formative feedback, smart feedback, study skills and the Kickstart programme.</p> <p>Student support and wellbeing systems such as the 'buddy' system and think-pair-share collaborative learning strategies are integrated into the programme, and the provision of a support helpline demonstrates a caring learning environment, particularly for distance learners.</p>	✓		

Online trackers are used to log student engagement and participation which allows tutors to identify those students who may require support.			
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Conclusion:

RVC is an experienced awarding institution and the range of assessment strategies has been proposed to promote effective learning at Level 6 and Level 7. However, some review of the module learning outcomes is required to ensure they are suitably challenging for a post-registration programme, and additional evidence is required to demonstrate that appropriate curricula and learning outcomes map to the assessments.

The course will be delivered by highly qualified staff with scope to be fully online if circumstances require it and additional supporting evidence is provided.

The modular qualification pathways have been carefully selected and designed, however, the incorporation of modern technologies and social media for some assessments would further enhance the student experience and be in line with the modern veterinary nurse in a range of practice settings. This would additionally allow nurses to use their baseline competencies and reinforce good practice, as well as improve, stretch and challenge at both levels, using familiar technologies that will enhance their nursing practice, and is an area for future consideration.

There is scope for more specialisms in the elective modules which is an area for future consideration.

The use of formative assessments throughout is to be commended, providing extensive feedback opportunities for students who engage with the course fully. Support for students from a variety of backgrounds who may not have previously studied at higher education level is excellent, which will help to promote progression within the veterinary nursing profession.

Suggestions

- a. Prepare separate course / module and student handbooks for each programme level.
- b. Review learning outcomes for level 7 pathway students to provide more stretch and challenge.
- c. Consider using a more varied choice of assessment methods, for example, podcasts, blogs, clinical audits or the production of conference proceedings in future assessments.
- d. Incorporate the opportunity to publish completed work with little or no amendments into assessment strategies to provide additional stretch and challenge.

Actions

- a. Review the use of Bloom's taxonomy, including reference to the SEEC credit level descriptors to ensure appropriate level descriptors are used. Please provide a document with tracked changes.
- b. Update programme documentation to specify that students must be on the RCVS VN Register at the time of application and stay on the register throughout the course to achieve the final RCVS Cert AVN award.
- c. Provide a copy of the external advisor's and external examiner's reports.
- d. Update programme documentation to state whether progression is possible within the same elective module designation.

- e. Provide a copy of, or access to, the student handbook.
- f. Provide the mapping document which demonstrates how module learning outcomes are aligned to the assessments.
- g. Provide a copy of the RVC policy for online examinations.

Standard 4 – Educators and Assessors

Theory and practice learning and assessment are facilitated effectively and objectively by appropriately qualified and experienced professionals with necessary expertise for their educational and assessor roles.

Standard part met			
Accredited education institutions must ensure educators and assessors:			
Requirement	Met	Part Met	Not Met
<p>Receive relevant induction, ongoing support, education and training <i>Evidence reviewed:</i> Table 2 Staff responsible for delivery, assessment and quality assurance CVs and CPD records for all staff involved in development, quality assurance and delivery CPD policy Details of the mechanism for obtaining feedback from students, teaching staff and employers Details of how data will be recorded, used to inform course review and development and to inform other student services Course design rationale for RVC Learn</p> <p>Hospital-based veterinary nurses are utilised as clinical educators and all possess, or are working towards, a Postgraduate Certificate in Veterinary Education (PGCert VetEd) at level 7 and are required to undertake the PGCert VetEd as a requirement of the role.</p> <p>The staff training and development document presented to the accreditation panel demonstrated a comprehensive policy for the induction, support and training of staff, but was out of date. Access online or a hard copy of an updated version is to be provided.</p>		✓	
<p>Have supported time and resources to enable them to fulfil their roles in addition to other professional responsibilities <i>Evidence reviewed:</i> Table 2 Staff responsible for delivery, assessment and quality assurance</p>	✓		

<p><i>CVs and CPD records for all staff involved in development, quality assurance and delivery</i> <i>CPD policy</i></p> <p>The evidence demonstrates that time allocated to teaching staff is calculated appropriately, based on projected student numbers. Clarification at the accreditation event indicates that this calculation includes the time allowed for all aspects of the role.</p> <p>RVN clinical educators will be involved in leading and deputising modules and teaching delivery on the proposed programme and are currently utilised as tutors on the existing licence to practise programmes at the RVC. They are fully supported by a 0.2 FTE contract and hours worked are recorded, and support is provided for these staff.</p>			
<p>Receive and act upon constructive feedback from students and the people they engage with to enhance the effectiveness of their teaching, supervision and assessment</p> <p><i>Evidence reviewed:</i> <i>Module Review and Student Feedback Survey EBVN 2017-18</i> <i>Details of the mechanism for obtaining feedback from students, teaching staff and employers</i> <i>Details of how data will be recorded, used to inform course review and development and to inform other student services</i> <i>Course design rationale for RVC Learn</i> <i>AQI Report Graduate Diploma in Veterinary Nursing 2018-19</i></p> <p>The evidence demonstrates the RVC utilises a variety of methods to seek out student feedback, identifies clear and achievable actions, and acts upon these constructively in order to improve the student learning experience. Feedback from the external examiner on the existing graduate diploma and the proposed programme has been identified and acted upon to improve the effectiveness of teaching and assessment.</p> <p>A copy of the employer survey for the proposed programme is to be submitted in order to ascertain the questions to be asked of employers. A suggested strategy to improve employer responsiveness is discussed in Standard 2.</p>		✓	
<p>Appropriately share and use evidence to make decisions on student assessment and progression</p> <p><i>Evidence reviewed:</i> <i>Details of the mechanism for obtaining feedback from students, teaching staff and employers</i> <i>Details of how data will be recorded, used to inform course review and development and to inform other student services</i></p>	✓		

<p><i>Course design rationale for RVC Learn</i> <i>Use of evidence to make decisions on student assessment and progression</i> <i>AQI Report Graduate Diploma in Veterinary Nursing 2018-19</i></p> <p>A range of policies and procedures demonstrate the appropriate sharing and use of evidence to make decisions on student progress, including measures to support new and inexperienced staff.</p>			
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Conclusion:

The RVC demonstrates a full commitment to its teaching staff with adequate teaching and preparation time allocated for involvement in the proposed programme, and support and development opportunities for new or inexperienced staff. Consideration has been given to the time required for marking and setting assessments, updating materials and monitoring online discussion forums.

The knowledge and skills of the staff delivering on the proposed programme is impressive and staff have been carefully selected for their expertise and clinical currency for course development. The use of RVN clinical educators is to be commended, and the use of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses working in specialist areas further enhances the student experience. This is demonstrated in the feedback from module reviews and the course management committee minutes.

Further evidence of the feedback sought from employers to inform future course development is required, however, extensive evidence has been provided of the methods used to obtain student feedback, and guidance from external examiners has been identified in annual quality monitoring reports. Clear evidence exists of previous opportunities taken by the RVC to promptly improve the student experience and the effectiveness of teaching and assessment, which is likely to provide a high degree of student satisfaction, engender respect in the teaching staff and maintain a good institutional reputation.

- Suggestions**
- a. Use previous postgraduate diploma student work as exemplar work for new students and encourage past students to present to, and buddy with, new students.
- Actions**
- a. Provide an up to date staff training and development policy.
 - b. Provide a blank copy of the employer feedback survey to ascertain the questions used.