Pre-registration practical examination guidance

For veterinary nurses trained outside the UK

Introduction
This handbook provides information to veterinary nurses trained outside the UK who have been informed that they need to sit the RCVS pre-registration (practical) examination prior to registering as a veterinary nurse in the UK.

Veterinary nurses required to sit the RCVS pre-registration practical examination will have already submitted a stage one application for their qualification and experience to be assessed and compared with the RCVS Day One Competences for Veterinary Nurses and RCVS Day One Skills for Veterinary Nurses. You will be informed by letter if you are required to sit the practical examination.

Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE)
Most veterinary nurses achieving their qualification outside of the UK will be required to pass the RCVS pre-registration OSCE examination.

An OSCE is a multi-station practical examination where students have a fixed period of time to complete a series of complex and non complex practical tasks. The examination covers the following topics:

- Diagnostic imaging etc.
- Laboratory diagnostics
- Nursing care
- Supporting anaesthesia
- Theatre practice

The examination is designed to assess the candidate’s skills, competences and practical application of clinical situations detailed in the RCVS Day One Skills for Veterinary Nurses. The examination is held up to three times a year. The dates and venues are detailed in the examination application form available from the veterinary nursing department.

The examination consists of twelve practical tasks. Candidates have a maximum of six minutes to complete each task. Each practical task has a scenario and a marking scheme. These are published online. Some of the steps will be classified as key steps; these are highlighted on the marking scheme. The pass mark for each OSCE station differs. In order to pass the OSCE station you need to achieve a mark equal to or higher than the pass mark for the station along with the key step(s).

Candidates who pass 8 stations will pass the examination.

At each OSCE station there will be one or more skills to complete. Each station will include a copy of the scenario and all the necessary equipment required to complete the skill. This may include a
model patient and hospital record. Infection control equipment (hand gel, aprons and gloves) will be
available if you are expected to use them.

The examination is held in a large room. The twelve practical stations will be set up behind private
screens. There will be one examiner marking you at each station. You will have approximately one
minute to read the scenario detailing what you are required to do. You will be told when to enter the
station. The examiner will provide additional information if this is required. You will be told when you
can start the task. You will also be told when there are two minutes remaining.

You are being judged on your practical skills. You may talk during the examination but unless
specifically requested in the scenario you will not be marked on your verbal explanation.

The equipment used in the examination is similar to that available in UK veterinary practice. Animals
are not used in the examination; instead medical models are used in order to simulate patients.

Each OSCE station has been designed to be completed within 6 minutes. It would be expected that
an experienced veterinary nurse would be able to complete the task in 4 minutes. The RCVS allows
6 minutes to take into account unfamiliarity with the examination equipment and the obvious
examination nerves. Do not worry if you complete the task early. This does not mean that you have
done something wrong. Finishing early does not necessarily indicate a problem; however you should
check that you have not forgotten something before leaving the station.

The content of the examination reflects current practical procedures undertaken in the UK. These
may differ from other countries and therefore you should ensure that you are familiar with the
methodology you are required to follow.

The examiner will assess you against the marking criteria published online. OSCE stations are
revised from time to time. No changes will be made in the four weeks prior to the examination. The
date of the last update is detailed on each OSCE station.

The examiners will be Registered Veterinary Nurses (RVNs) or veterinary surgeons. All examiners
receive training and attend standardisation sessions. The role of the examiner is to assess
candidates carrying out the task. The examiner will observe you and complete the mark sheet as you
progress through the task.

Candidates are allowed to verbally describe their actions if they want to, but are not usually required
to do this.

If you complete the tasks within the six minutes, you will be allowed to leave the station and wait
outside until you are asked to move onto the next station.
Dress code for the examination
Candidates should wear the uniform they wear at work. Your shoes should enclose the whole foot. Open toed shoes or sandals are not permitted. The uniform and shoes should be clean and free from obvious dirt and stains. Hair should be clean and tidy. Long hair should be secured off the face. Nails should be clean and well manicured (short), false nails and varnish should be removed. It is advisable to remove all jewellery except plain wedding bands.

How to prepare for the OSCE
The RCVS publishes the OSCE stations online. Candidates are advised to download the OSCE stations relevant to the RCVS pre-registration examination. You should refer to text books to confirm the methodology used in the UK.

If you are registered for the Period of Supervised Adaptation (PSA) for veterinary nurses trained outside the UK, you are likely to be working alongside Registered Veterinary Nurses (RVNs). These nurses will have taken OSCE examinations. Talk to them about their experiences.

Use the online checklists to practice the OSCE stations and become familiar with the marking criteria. When you are ready ask others in the practice to observe you and provide you with feedback on your performance.

Colleges offering veterinary nurse training in the UK often run revision courses. At list of colleges can be found on the RCVS website. You are advised to attend at least one revision course before entering the examination. You should inform the college that you are entering the RCVS pre-registration examination and ensure that they will be able to cover the skills required during the revision session.

The pass rate for the pre-registration examination is very low. It is currently around 50%. The RCVS does not predetermine the pass rate and it is possible for all candidates to pass. Historically most candidates are not successful the first time. You should therefore ensure that you are fully prepared before you enter the examination.

There are no specific books based on the OSCE examination for veterinary nurses. Many of the veterinary nursing textbooks and journals contain acceptable methods for carrying out each practical skill.

Common mistakes in the examination
As previously indicated the pass rate for the RCVS pre-registration examination is about 50%. This means that about half of all entries fail. The pass rate for UK trained nurses is in the region of 70-80%. The lower pass rate for the pre-registration examination is thought to be due to the lack of preparation by nurses trained outside the UK. The OSCE stations cover common and important skills that veterinary nurses encounter in veterinary practices in the UK, the methodology may differ from that that you are used to in the country you trained in. Common mistakes include;
Not preparing for the examination before hand
• Being unfamiliar with the marking criteria for the OSCE stations (available online)
• Not reading the instructions carefully
• Misinterpreting the instructions
• Incorrectly calculating dose rates for medications
• Not including the correct units in calculations
• Not using an aseptic technique
• Wearing jewellery
• Taking more than 6 minutes to complete the task

Entering the examination
Once you are ready to sit the examination you should contact the RCVS for an application form. The closing date along with the date and venue of the examination is detailed on the application form. Payment must be made at the time of entry. After the closing date you will be informed of the date and time of your appointment.

Reasonable adjustment
If you have any special educational or other needs/disability, which may require special provision to be made in the examinations you can apply for adjustments to be made in your examination. Applications must be received at least two months before your examination. You will receive a letter confirming the adjustments we will make. If you have been permitted to have adjustments made then you should indicate this on the examination entry form. Assessments for special educational needs made before you were sixteen must have been made within two years of the application for entry to the examinations or an updated report will be required. If the report was made after your sixteenth birthday then no updated report will be necessary, even if it is more than two years old. Applications made for medical reasons must be accompanied by a current medical letter.

Special considerations
If you wish to notify the RCVS of circumstances which may have unduly affected your examination performance, you must do so within 5 days of sitting the examination. You must use the appropriate Special Consideration Form which can be obtained on request from the RCVS, downloaded from RCVS Online or obtained at the examination centre.

The RCVS will give special consideration to personal circumstances (such as illness or serious personal problems) which occurred unexpectedly and immediately prior to, or during, the examination. They will also take into consideration events occurring during the examination itself (such as undue disturbance). If the RCVS considers that such circumstances have unduly affected your performance, your mark may be adjusted or the examination attempt may be nullified. You should note that adjustment of marks applies only in the case of borderline failure. Illness cannot be used as a reason for special consideration – if you are unwell you should withdraw from the examination and re-apply when you are fit to sit.
Examination results
Your examination results will be sent to you within 4 weeks of the examination. A copy of the mark sheet will be provided.

Examination results enquiry and appeals
If you have an enquiry concerning the accuracy of your examination results then you must submit the Exam Enquiry form. This can be downloaded from www.rcvs.org.uk. There is a fee for the enquiry which will be refunded if the investigation identifies an irregularity in your examination.

If you are not satisfied with the result of the enquiry or you feel that an enquiry is not necessary, you may submit an examination appeal. Examination appeals may be made only against the conduct and conditions of the examination and not against the marks awarded. An appeal must be made, in writing and using the RCVS Appeal Form available from the RCVS, within 28 days of the date of the letter advising of your examination result or 14 days after the letter informing you of the result of your enquiry.

Re-sitting the examination
You are permitted to re-sit the examination as often as you like. You will however be required to provide evidence that you are taking remedial action before entering your fourth and subsequent examinations.