Veterinary Nurses Council  
Agenda for meeting to be held on Tuesday 2 February 2016 at 11.00am

1. Apologies for absence

2. Declarations of interest

3. Minutes of meeting held on 5 October 2015
   Paper attached

4. Matters arising
   a. Protection of the Veterinary Nurse Title
   b. Ethical Review Panel
   c. Schedule 3
   d. Associates
   e. Fitness to practise
   f. Any other matters arising

5. Update on operational matters
   Oral report

Matters for decision by VN Council

6. VN Education Committee
   Minutes of meeting held on 16 November 2015
   Paper attached

Matters of note

7. Golden Jubilee Award
   Oral report

8. Reports from Committees
   a. Practice Standards Group
   b. Standards Committee
   c. VN Preliminary Investigation Committee
   d. VN Disciplinary Committee

   Oral report
   Oral report
   Paper attached
   Paper attached
9. **VN Register report**
   Registrations and removals  
   Paper attached

10. **Communications report**  
    Oral report

11. **Awarding Body closure**  
    Oral report

12. **Any other business**

13. **Date of next meeting**
    Tuesday 4 May 2016

**Confidential and private items**

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January 2015  
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Veterinary Nurses Council
Minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2015

Members:  
Mrs Elizabeth Cox - Chair  
Mrs Victoria Aspinall  
Mrs Lucy Bellwood  
* Miss Alison Carr  
Dr Niall Connell - Vice-Chair  
Mr Dominic Dyer  
Mrs Elizabeth Figg  
* Mrs Andrea Jeffery  
Mrs Katherine Kissick - Vice-Chair  
* Miss Hilary Orpet  
* Professor Susan Proctor  
Miss Amber Richards  
Mr Peter Robinson  
* Colonel Neil Smith  
* Mrs Penelope Swindlehurst  

*absent

In attendance:  
Mrs Annette Amato - Committee Secretary  
Mr Luke Bishop - Communications Officer  
Mrs Julie Dugmore - Head of Veterinary Nursing  
Mr Gordon Hockey - Registrar  
Mrs Lily Lipman - Qualifications Officer  
Mr Nick Stace - Chief Executive

Welcome to new members

1.  
The Chair welcomed Lucy Bellwood (elected veterinary nurse) and Peter Robinson (appointed veterinary surgeon) to their first meeting as members of the Council.

Apologies for absence

2.  
Apologies for absence were received from Miss Alison Carr, Mrs Andrea Jeffery, Miss Hilary Orpet, Professor Susan Proctor, Colonel Neil Smith and Mrs Penelope Swindlehurst.

Declarations of interest

3.  
Mrs Kissick declared that she had been appointed as Chair of the Alderney Animal Welfare
Association. There were no other new declarations of interest.

Minutes of the meeting held on 5 May 2015

4. The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 May 2015 were accepted as a correct record.

Matters arising

5. **Fitness to Practise.** It was reported that the first meeting of the VN Fitness to Practise working group would take place on 6 November. The first draft of the guidance booklet had already been circulated, and it was hoped that the work of the group would be completed within a year.

6. **Centre and Training Practice handbooks.** The Head of Veterinary Nursing reported that Centre and Training Practice handbooks had now been completed, in the same format as the AO/HEI handbooks, setting out the criteria and processes involved in VN training. These were now available electronically via the RCVS website. The handbooks would be reviewed after six months, taking into account feedback. A student handbook was currently being developed.

7. **Protection of the Veterinary Nurse title.** The Chair thanked the communications department for preparing the promotional material and e-petition in support of protection of the VN title, and reported that more than 16,000 signatures had been received so far. There had been a real team effort throughout the profession, with VNs and others making good use of social media. The template letters provided on the website were also being downloaded and sent to MPs, and responses were being collated by the communications department. Many practices were promoting the petition and providing details in their reception areas.

8. The Chair added her particular thanks to Helen Tottey, who had been tirelessly promoting the campaign and had arranged for the local press to attend BVNA congress. The aim was to acquire in excess of 100,000 signatures. The Chief Executive added his congratulations to all involved in the campaign which had galvanised the profession, and was being taken very seriously in government circles where it was recognised that veterinary nursing had matured as a profession in its own right.

Update on operational matters

9. The Chief Executive reported that considerable progress had been made with the strategic plan, with more than two thirds of the objectives having been achieved. Notable successes included the recognition of the RCVS in the “Great Place to Work” awards, resulting in the provision of a better service to the public and the professions.

10. The joint RCVS/BVA Vet Futures project had been launched in November 2015. There had now been twelve meetings held throughout the country attended by veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses. The aim was to produce a credible report to provide a framework for the next 20 years. It was hoped to involve VNs more in participating in the project in the future.
11. An awayday would be booked for 2016 to develop a strategic plan for the next three years, in light of the Vet Futures report.

Proposed amendment to Veterinary Nurse Registration Rules

12. Council noted a paper setting out proposed amendments to the Veterinary Nurse Registration rules, relating to the fee structure and payment dates for VN initial registration and restoration fees. The amendments had been proposed in order to bring the provisions in line with those relating to veterinary surgeons, and to ensure that the position is the same for all VNs regardless of the time of year they seek to be registered or restored.

13. Council was in full agreement with the proposals for changes as set out in the paper, and recommended that the proposed amendments to the Veterinary Nurse Registration Rules should be submitted to RCVS Council for approval, according to the Charter byelaws.

Golden Jubilee Award

14. Council considered a paper setting out the current nomination criteria and awarding process for the VN Golden Jubilee Award, including suggestions on how these might be changed to encourage more participation in terms of nominations. It was acknowledged that the aim of the award is to recognise those who have gone “above and beyond” and are taking a leadership role within the profession. The recommendations included the restriction of the award to veterinary nurses only, to recognise the increasingly prominent role that veterinary nurses have in their own right, and to ensure that those recognised as taking a leadership role are from the VN profession. It was also recommended that the award recipient should be able to take an ambassadorial role within the profession and to be given a speaking platform at the BVNA Congress (with effect from 2016).

15. In response to a concern raised in the discussion, it was agreed that the communications department would be available to advise the recipient in the preparation of the presentation, and for those who were unavailable to speak or preferred not to do so, a published article in the veterinary press.

16. Council welcomed and agreed the proposals for the amendments and also agreed that the nomination period should be changed in future to align with that for the Queen’s medal for veterinary surgeons and other RCVS honours. As a transitional arrangement and to ensure that there is a recipient at the 2016 AGM, the nomination period for the 2016 award would run from the end of November 2015 until the end of January 2016. Further guidance would be provided within the nomination paperwork to assist nominators with the criteria.

Veterinary Nurses and Anaesthesia

17. The Chair presented a paper which had been prepared by the Standards and Advisory Manager for discussion by VN Council and Standards Committee, reporting on recent discussions with various UK veterinary organisations regarding proposals to extend the role
of veterinary nurses in anaesthesia. Council was provided with the report of a meeting held on 23 June to discuss the issues and areas where clarification was required, together with feedback and comments from BVA, BSAVA and the Association of Veterinary Anaesthetists (AVA) and BVNA. The view of the College’s legal advisor was also included.

18. The Chair noted that the views from stakeholders had been very positive, with the AVA commenting that this gave the opportunity to improve anaesthesia standards in the UK. BEVA suggested that extra training may need to be developed in the equine area. The importance of informed consent and the public perception had also been discussed.

19. It was also reported that Standards Committee had been very positive in its reception of the paper at its meeting on 30 September, and would be making recommendations to Council along the lines set out in the paper, subject to a few changes in the wording.

20. In discussion of the wording, the general agreement by VN Council was that the onus needed to be on both the veterinary surgeon and the veterinary nurse to ensure that the VN is competent, and to address any shortfalls through CPD, rather than introducing additional training overall. It was agreed that the public perception was important and that clients should be made aware of who is supervising the anaesthesia.

21. At the conclusion of the discussion, Council agreed that it was happy to support the recommendations of Standards Committee to RCVS Council in favour of extending the role of veterinary nurses to assist with all aspects of anaesthesia, with the development of appropriate guidance. It was noted that, should RCVS Council agree in principle to extending the role of VNs, further work would be carried out on the detail of the proposals.

English Language testing

22. The Registrar reported that RCVS Council had agreed in June to introduce provision in the Code of Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons to strengthen the requirements in relation to the ability to communicate with clients and other members of the veterinary team in written and spoken English. Defra is currently consulting on changes to the Veterinary Surgeons Act to empower the Registrar to impose an English language test where the College has ‘serious and concrete doubts’ concerning an EU applicant’s English language ability, and it is expected that language testing for veterinary nurses will be introduced simultaneously with the changes for veterinary surgeons. VN Council, at its meeting in May 2015, had confirmed its agreement that these proposals should also be applied to Veterinary Nurses.

23. Council considered and was in full agreement with proposed changes to the Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses to support these requirements in due course.

VN Disciplinary Committee (VN DC)

24. Council noted a paper setting out the current legal position in relation to the membership of the VN DC, with proposals that the current VN members be reappointed for a further term and that the DC Legal Assessors be appointed to VN DC. The Registrar added that the legal
complexity of the VN DC cases is similar to that of DC cases and it therefore seemed sensible to use the same group of assessors.

25. Council agreed the following:
   a. To reappoint the two existing VN members, Ms C Defries RVN and Ms J Smith RVN for a further term of three and two years respectively.
   b. To appoint the current DC Legal Assessors as Legal Assessors to VN DC; and
   c. To allow for a suitable alternative Legal Assessor to be used in the event that none of the appointed Legal Assessors are available.

Ethical Review Panel

26. Council was invited to comment on a paper which had been considered by Standards Committee and the Operational Board containing proposals for the implementation of an RCVS ethical review panel, which was recommended in 2013 by a joint RCVS/BVA working party. The Registrar indicated that he hoped this would be a joint initiative between RCVS and BSAVA and that the purpose of the panel would be to consider proposals from veterinary surgeons who wish to carry out clinical research but do not have access to an institutional ER framework.

27. In discussion by the Council, disappointment was expressed that the proposal did not make reference to veterinary nursing, and the comment was made that it would be helpful for institutions that may be experiencing difficulties in providing guidance to students from a veterinary nursing point of view. The Registrar indicated that the aim of the panel was not to provide ethical review for students, but for those who would not be able to access guidance through an educational establishment.

28. Although it was accepted that all institutions must provide their own ethical guidance, it was pointed out that those offering VN training and degrees for qualified VNs who may be undertaking research from practice do not have the same experience as the veterinary schools in this area, and the opportunity to seek RCVS guidance might be helpful on occasions. The Registrar suggested that the way forward might for the initiative to involve BVNA as well as BSAVA, and the RCVS to widen the scope to include veterinary nurses, and agreed to take this forward.

VN Education Sub-Committee

29. **Minutes of meeting held on 29 June 2015.** The Head of Veterinary Nursing presented the report in the absence of the Chairman of the Sub-Committee, and drew Council’s attention to the following points:

30. **Handbooks.** As previously reported the Centre and TP handbooks were now available on the website, and production of the student handbook was in hand.

31. **Nursing Progress Log (NPL) review and development.** A working party had been established to review and develop the NPL, in parallel with the review of the day one skills,
and had met the previous week. There would be a number of focus groups at the BVNA congress and “survey monkey” would be used to obtain feedback.

32. **Pre-Registration examination.** It was possible that the changes to the pre-registration examination would not take place as originally envisaged in early January, as the blueprint is still being worked on.

33. **Terms of Reference.** The Sub-Committee had reviewed its terms of reference (ToR) and membership. Council was provided with a paper setting out the rationale for the proposed changes, to include an employer member and a change of name to the Veterinary Nurse Education Committee. The Head of Veterinary Nursing confirmed that she would be seeking advice from the Registrar and Director of HR on the recruitment of the employer member. Council confirmed its agreement to the proposed changes and approved the revised terms of reference.

**Reports from Committees**

34. **Practice Standards Group (PSG).** Miss Richards reported that the modules for the new Scheme were near completion. There had been many applications for the new assessor posts with forty two candidates being interviewed over a two week period. Eighteen new assessors had been recruited. The new IT system for the Scheme was nearly ready to go live, and was currently in the testing phase. The scheme would be formally launched at the London Vet Show in November.

35. It was noted that one of the criteria for the recent recruitment of assessors was that they should be veterinary surgeons. It was suggested that in future, VN Council might consider pressing for the criteria to be widened to include veterinary nurses. It was generally agreed that veterinary nurses are often responsible for ensuring standards within the practice and that this was a valid suggestion. The Chair commented that it is rewarding for the VN Council to be able to have an input into the PSG.

36. **Standards Committee.** Mrs Bellwood reported on areas of particular interest to VN Council which had been discussed at the recent Standards Committee meeting. This included a consolidation of existing guidance on microchips with new sections on the compulsory microchipping regulations as well as advice on dealing with lost or stray companion animals. The Committee also approved updated guidance on reporting prescription misuse and the reclassification of Ketamine as well as a brand new guidance document dealing specifically with controlled drugs in veterinary practice. Guidance on antimicrobial resistance had been strengthened, with links to further sources of advice.

37. Following on from previous discussions, the Committee had discussed setting up a select committee style panel to hear evidence from the profession and others on the issue of telemedicine and where this might go in the future. Key areas for consideration were highlighted, including developments in other jurisdictions such as the USA, remote service providers, vets working in remote areas and developments in the human healthcare sector. Some members highlighted the importance of physical examination by a veterinary surgeon,
but recognised that there should be consideration of patients in remote areas etc. There followed a general discussion on this issue, in particular the role which veterinary nurses might have to play, and VN Council wished to register an interest in the inclusion of a VN on the review panel.

38. The Chair reported that the Certification Sub Committee review of the current Supporting Guidance on Certification, including the 12 Principles, has now begun. The principles have been in place for a number of years and the Sub Committee would like to look at whether these principles are still fit for purpose. A representative from VN Council has been invited to join the group to consider the issue of veterinary nurses and certification, and whether this might be appropriate in the future.

39. **VN Preliminary Investigation Committee.** The Report from the Chairman of the RVN PI Committee on the activity of the Committee since the last VN Council meeting was noted.

40. **VN Disciplinary Committee.** There have been no Disciplinary hearings against RVNs since the last meeting of VN Council. Once case has been referred by the VN PI Committee and the hearing is due to take place shortly.

**VN Council Strategy Plan**

41. The Head of Veterinary Nursing tabled an updated version of the Strategy Plan for the next three to five years, which now included the priority ratings agreed by Council and details of the achievements to date. An awayday will be arranged for early 2016 to review the plan in more detail and incorporate into the Vet Futures plan.

**Communications report**

42. The Director of Communications reported on a number of recent and forthcoming activities.

43. **BVNA Congress.** The main focus on the RCVS stand at the BVNA Congress would be the protection of the Veterinary Nurse title, together with a Vet Futures game. A declaration ceremony would take place on the Saturday, to enable those RVNs who have not yet had the opportunity to make their professional declaration to do so, followed by a question and answer session hosted jointly with BVNA officers.

44. **Regional Question Time.** Forthcoming RQT events would take place on 24 November (Watford), 17 May (Nottingham) and 31 May (Cardiff – tying in with the RCVS Council meeting later that week).

45. **London Vet Show.** The London Vet Show on 19 and 20 November would include a presentation from the Mind Matters Initiative, the launch of the new Practice Standards Scheme and the launch of the Vet Futures Report.

46. **RCVS publications.** The annual RCVS *Facts* publication, containing a detailed selection of facts and figures about veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses in the UK and overseas,
will be published before the end of the year. Other forthcoming publications would be the November issue of *RCVS News* and the December issue of *VN Education*.

47. **Vet Futures.** Monthly blogs were being posted on the Vet Futures website, and the current blog relates to the shortage of VNs. It is noted that the veterinary nursing profession is generally highly engaged in online activity, and it was therefore suggested that social media should be used in promoting the next Golden Jubilee award.

48. **VN Council election.** Details of the nomination period for the next VN Council election would be published at the end of October, with a “Meet the RCVS” day for potential nominees for VN and RCVS Council on 15 December.

49. **Mind Matters.** A one-day interprofessional symposium would take place on 28 October at Maudsley Learning in London, aiming to look at commonalities in the mental health issues of the medical professions, and where collaborations can be made. A series of four training events will be held before the end of the year as part of a trial. The training will enable delegates to spot the signs and symptoms of mental ill-health in colleagues and feel able to signpost them to appropriate sources of help. Places will be free, provided that full feedback is given by those attending so that the trial can be evaluated and further meetings rolled out next year. Details would be circulated by email.

**CPD monitoring**

50. Council noted the report of the first meeting of the CPD referral group for veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses, which had been established to make decisions on referring cases of serial non-compliance or non-response to the Professional Conduct Department for possible referral to the Preliminary Investigation Committee. The group had reviewed a list of 21 nurses, 17 of whom had been included in four audits and had not responded, and 4 who had been included in three audits and had not responded. These nurses would be given a last chance to send their CPD record and would be contacted by telephone by the Professional Conduct Department to discuss their reasons for not responding. The results would be reported to the next meeting of the group on 4 November.

51. The Vice-Chair added that it was important not just to focus on those VNs who have not responded, but to note the positive aspects of the feedback from the audits with the great majority of VNs having complied with the requirements and undertaken varied CPD.

**Meeting with BVNA Officers**

52. Mrs Kissick reported that a very successful and positive meeting had been held between the Chair and Vice Chair of VN Council, the Head of Veterinary Nursing and the BVNA Officers on 5 May, following the morning meeting of VN Council. Items covered included an update on unpaid work placements, BVNA involvement in the review of Day One Skills and the production on Year One Skills, apprenticeships, the Golden Jubilee award, and the CPD audit.
53. The Head of Veterinary Nursing reported on the good progress which had been made in the RCVS Awards surrender of recognition to award regulated qualifications, and presented a paper setting out the position as at 10 September 2015. There are now only three students in England affiliated to RCVS Awards. All three have passed the RCVS Awards external examinations but still have internal assessments to complete and are not yet therefore eligible for certification. The RCVS is in dialogue with the centres regarding these students, and the Awarding Body is due to close as planned on 1 December 2015.

54. As of 14 July 2015 there are no longer any Welsh centres or learners and RCVS Awards is no longer recognised to award qualifications in Wales.

55. It was confirmed that the surrender of recognition of the Awarding Body did not affect the pre-registration examinations which are run by the RCVS as part of its regulatory remit. Twenty two candidates are due to sit the VN pre-registration examinations in late October.

Any other business

56. The Chair reported that Mrs Amy Robinson had tendered her resignation from Council. Mrs Marie Rippingale, who had stood as a candidate in the 2015 election, had accepted the invitation to serve on Council, subjects to approval by the Operational Board, for the remainder of the four year term, to July 2017.

Date of next meeting

57. Tuesday 2 February 2016 at 11.00am.

Items covered in confidential session

Pre-meeting

58. It was agreed to trial the idea of a pre-meeting to allow general discussion by Council on specific issues, in a more informal setting, in a similar way to the RCVS Council dinner which takes place the evening before the main Council meeting. The first pre-meeting would be held at 10.00am on Tuesday 2 February, at the RCVS, before the VN Council meeting at 11.00am.

Update from RCVS Council meeting on 29 September 2015

59. The Chief Executive provided an oral update on the items covered at the meeting of RCVS Council on 29 September 2015. VN Council had been circulated with the papers, for information.

60. The Registrar updated VN Council on the Associates paper and the possibility of additional associates (to RVNs) regulated by RCVS; as well as the opportunities for the veterinary
nursing profession with Defra’s offer to open Schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act for review.

Arrangements for registration events

61. It was agreed to defer discussion of this item to the next meeting.

Draft budget for 2015

62. Council noted the budget for 2016 together with proposed fees. A few queries were raised on details which would be referred back to the Director of Finance for clarification.
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Veterinary Nurse Education Committee
Minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2015

Members:  
- Mrs Victoria Aspinall - VN Council veterinary surgeon  
- Mrs Elizabeth Figg - VN Council veterinary nurse  
- Mrs Susan Howarth - HE programme provider  
- Mrs Andrea Jeffery - VN Council veterinary nurse (Chair)  
- Dr Elizabeth Mossop - Independent educationalist  
- Professor Susan Proctor - VN Council lay member  
- Mr Peter Robinson - VN Council veterinary surgeon  
- Mrs Penelope Swindlehurst - VN Council lay member  
- Dr Jenny Watkins - FE programme provider  

*absent

In attendance:  
- Mrs Annette Amato - Committee Secretary  
- Mr Luke Bishop - Communications Officer  
- Mrs Elizabeth Cox - Chair, VN Council  
- Mrs Julie Dugmore - Head of Veterinary Nursing  
- Mrs Victoria Hedges - Examinations Manager  
- Mrs Lily Lipman - Qualifications Manager  
- Mrs Jenny Soreskog-Turp - CPD Officer  

Apologies for absence

1. Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Elizabeth Figg and Dr Jenny Watkins.

Operational update

2. The Head of Veterinary Nursing reported that the new improved enrolment process was now underway, with an additional dedicated member of staff to assist with the processing of enrolments during the peak period. By Friday 13 November, a total of 572 enrolments, including 85 HE students, from over 23 centres had been fully processed and uploaded on to the database, and the centres had been provided with the student login details for the NPL. Most centres had also been sent the enrolment letters and USB sticks for their students, except in the cases where incorrect application forms had been provided by the centres. A further 16 spreadsheets had been checked and were awaiting the next upload.

3. Unfortunately, despite the presentation on the enrolment process to the Awarding Organisations (AOs) and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) at the meeting in May there was not one centre which had provided a perfect set of enrolment documents, and 32 applications from 16 centres which had been received in October were still outstanding,
pending receipt of further information. In general though, the system is working well and once all the required documents and payment have been received at the RCVS, enrolments are processed within a week. An article would be produced for the forthcoming issue of VN Education, and an email update would also be sent to all the Heads of Centre.

Declarations of interest

4. There were no new declarations of interest.

Minutes of the meeting of the Education Committee held on 29 June 2015

5. The minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2015 were accepted as a correct record.

Matters arising on the Minutes

6. **Apprenticeships.** The Head of Veterinary Nursing reported that the first meeting of the employer led group would take place the following week, with Jenny Watkins and Kathy Kissick attending on behalf of the RCVS. A report would be provided to the next meeting.

7. **Higher Education Benchmarks.** It had been confirmed by QAA that the necessary amendments had been made to the HE benchmarks to reflect the changes following the introduction of the new Royal Charter in February.

VN Licence to practise qualifications

**New / provisionally accredited AOs / HEIs**

8. The Committee noted the update report on new and provisionally accredited AOs and HEIs offering awards leading to a licence to practise qualification in veterinary nursing. There were no specific decisions required. It was reported, in response to a query, that the University of Wales Trinity St David had recently provided the list of their newly appointed training practices as requested. It was noted that there are currently only six students on the programme.

AO / HEI monitoring report

9. **Routine monitoring reports.** The Qualifications Officer presented a summary of the auditing activity undertaken for established AOs and HEIs since the last meeting, together with several quality monitoring reports and risk assessments. The current plan for visit and audit regimes for the forthcoming year had been circulated to the Committee with the agenda.

10. **Central Qualifications.** The Committee considered charts provided by CQ setting out a sample performance analysis of some of the OSCE examiners from 2014. The Examinations Manager reminded the Committee it had been a condition of the approval
of the proposed examination system put forward by CQ, that a statistical analysis should be provided. The Committee was in agreement that a further detailed explanation and clarification of the information was required, and it was noted that by now, more than 100 students would have been examined by this awarding organisation which should allow for the provision of meaningful statistics. This would be requested and reported back to the next meeting. The Qualifications Manager confirmed that the other actions requested as part of the CQ audit had been met.

11. It was also agreed that there may be instances where other AOs or HEIs may be requested to provide further information on their examination systems as part of the audit and quality assurance process.

12. **City & Guilds update.** The Head of Veterinary Nursing reported that since the last meeting of the Committee, there had been a further meeting with C&G, attended by the CEO of the RCVS, to discuss the ongoing areas of concern. Since that meeting, progress had been made and thirteen of the twenty actions had now been met.

13. The Head of Veterinary Nursing sought and received the guidance of the Committee regarding the evidence provided by C&G in relation to one of the outstanding actions, and it was agreed that greater clarity was necessary before the action was met. A further meeting was due to take place with C&G later in the week, and the Head of Veterinary Nursing reassured the Committee that she felt that the actions were now being adequately addressed through the system of meetings and consultations.

14. The Qualifications Manager clarified a few points raised by the Committee on other monitoring reports.

**Approval of AO / HEI external examiners**

15. The Committee received the list of the current external examiners appointed by the AOs and HEIs, with details of their qualifications and experience. It was noted that some external examiner appointments are nearing their end, and the Qualifications Manager confirmed that she would contact the relevant organisations if she had not heard from them regarding new examiner appointments by 1 December.

**Pre-registration examination**

16. At its meeting in June, the Committee had considered several options and agreed a blueprint for the format of the pre-registration OSCE examinations, including the number and spread of stations. The Chair had requested that before the new format was introduced, the matter of pass levels and other critical details should be carefully considered. The Examinations Manager had carried out additional research on all aspects of blueprinting and standard setting, and presented a paper setting out her findings, including a number of case studies and comparison of results using different methods. A summary of various options was provided, including a requirement to pass each individual station, the weighting of each step in the marking criteria and the
possibility of one-section re-sit examinations. The Chair thanked the Examinations Manager for this very detailed and helpful paper.

17. The Committee was in agreement that the overall aim of the examination was to ensure that only competent nurses pass the OSCE, and Dr Mossop provided some additional information on the changes that have taken place over the past few years in the determination of the pass mark and the current methods used in the veterinary schools and by the GMC. It was accepted that while needing to ensure full competence, the standard setting and the costs must be realistic.

18. It was noted that all candidates, regardless of their results, are sent their feedback sheets from each OSCE station, and that the pass rate for international students has increased dramatically since the provision of detailed advice and guidance. At the conclusion of the discussion, it was agreed that the proposed blueprint which was agreed at the previous meeting should be introduced, with ten stations each of 10 minutes in length, and rest stations as appropriate. The pass mark would be set using a valid standard setting method, key steps would be utilised and the number of stations to be passed would be identified by the Examinations Sub-Committee.

19. The Committee separately reconsidered its decision regarding candidates failing a station due to poor communication. The Registrar is currently making arrangements for veterinary surgeons and nurses whose English language is questionable to take a mandatory test before entering the register. It was agreed that any candidates with poor communication in English could then be referred for this test, rather than failing the examination as a whole solely due to communication problems.

20. The Committee reiterated its thanks to the Examinations Manager for her hard work on this issue.

Standards for training and education

Day One Skills

21. The Committee received a paper reporting on the work of the Day One Skills list working party, which had met twice in 2015. The working party had reviewed the current day one competences, and had developed a practical skills list based on these competences. The professional skills had been removed and a separate list of professional skills and attributes had been produced. A six-week consultation period with the industry took place in the summer and the final skills list presented to the Committee had been prepared following this consultation.

22. The new skills list comprised ten units and seventy nine skills, and many of the low level skills in the current list which were not specific to veterinary nursing had been removed, as they were not considered to be absolutely critical to safe and effective practice as a veterinary nurse. The Committee approved the proposed list, to be renamed the Practical and Clinical skills list.
23. The Committee then discussed the proposed list of general professional skills and attributes, and a few concerns were raised and additions suggested. It was agreed in principle that teaching and assessment of professionalism was necessary and Dr Mossop offered to forward her paper on this subject. The list would be reviewed and revised in time for the next meeting.

24. Finally, it was agreed that detailed guidance should be developed for the practical skills, along with a structured framework of assessment for the general professional skills and attributes.

25. The Committee discussed a presentation made before the start of the meeting by Stephanie Hedges RVN, putting the case for including additional guidance in VN training programmes to cover the behavioural and emotional needs of patients. The Committee discussed the presentation and the information provided, and agreed that detailed guidance regarding animal behaviour, ethology and prophylaxis should be provided alongside the newly revised RCVS Day One Skills for veterinary nurses. It was also decided that colleges should receive specific guidance (and references) for delivery of core behavioural knowledge within the veterinary nurse programmes.

Training practice and student numbers

26. The Committee noted a paper showing the current numbers of approved training practices offering clinical training and work experience to student veterinary nurses, including details of TP and student numbers by region. The Committee was pleased to note the steady increase in the number of TPs, with a total of 333 new TPs in the period October 2014 to September 2015, and 58 withdrawals in the same period. Some of the reasons for withdrawal were provided.

27. It was suggested that it would be useful to target the areas where there are few training practices, to encourage more to become involved. It was agreed that initially information should be obtained on the total number and type of practices in each region, to ascertain what proportion of suitable practices were already approved, as it may be that the majority were already involved in training.

Handbooks and Schedule 3 Skills

28. The Head of Veterinary Nursing presented a paper setting out proposals for amendments to the Annexes of the handbooks for AOs/HEIs, Centres and TPs. When the handbooks were being developed, the Committee had agreed that it would be useful to annotate the Day One Skills in the annexes, to denote areas which were considered by the Committee to be activities reserved for veterinary nurses. Since the publication of the handbooks, a number of requests for clarification had been received, where it had been felt that the guidance appeared to be in conflict with previous published advice. The Registrar had therefore advised that the designation against specific skills should be removed, and that the current published guidance on Schedule 3 should be included. The Committee noted
the current guidance, and an article which had been published in the 2010 VN Standard publication.

29. The Committee felt that before inclusion in the handbooks, there were areas where the current guidance needed to be updated and clarified, and agreed that the professional conduct department should be asked to undertake this review. In the meantime, it was agreed that the designation against specific skills should be removed, as well as the explanatory paragraph in the handbooks.

ACOVENE update

30. The Head of Veterinary Nursing reported that ACOVENE had not carried out visits to any of the UK AOs/HEIs in the past year. Following changes in the ACOVENE board, it had been agreed that the appropriate procedure in future would be for ACOVENE to audit the RCVS, as the accrediting body for UK qualifications, in addition to the individual AOs/HEIs. A visit would take place to the RCVS by one of the ACOVENE board members on 23 November.

Continuing Professional Development

31. The Committee noted the initial summary of results from the 2015 CPD audit, which had been the sixth annual audit of a sample of veterinary nurses’ CPD records, covering just under 800 nurses in total. The response rate from a random sample of nurses who had not been selected for audit in the last five years received a very high response, with 98% of the sample responding, and 75% of this group achieving a total of 45 hours or more of CPD over the three year audit period. The response rate and amount of CPD carried out was much lower in the groups who had fallen short in previous years, or had failed to respond previously. Further breakdown would be provided at the next meeting.

32. It was encouraging to note that the number of RVNS in the audit who were using the online recording tool was 75%, compared to 59% the previous year.

33. In response to a query from the Chair, it was reported that the CPD referral group had been established to review the issue of those nurses who had not responded to the request to submit their CPD records in several previous audits, despite remaining active on the register. The nurses were being contacted individually by the senior solicitor in the professional conduct department and where necessary had been referred to the Registrar.

Post Registration Qualifications

Diploma in Advanced Veterinary Nursing report

34. It was noted that the DipAVN working group would be established in 2016 once the new external examiner was in post. A visit would take place on 11 January to the Royal Veterinary College, which had applied for accreditation of its advanced diploma, and a
DipAVN external examiner appointment

35. The Head of Veterinary Nursing reported that interviews had been conducted for three prospective candidates, during July and that Catherine Phillips RVN REVN HonAssoc RCVS had been appointed. An induction programme had been devised and the retiring external examiner would act as a mentor in the next examinations to be held in February 2016.

Items for publication

36. The next edition of the VN Education newsletter would be published in mid-December and the following topics would be included:
   - Measures taken to improve the enrolment process
   - Training Practice numbers
   - Audit of VN CPD
   - Golden Jubilee award for veterinary nurses
   - Changes in the registration rules
   - Review of Day One Skills
   - Changes in the codes of conduct to allow for English language testing
   - Closure of the RCVS Awarding Body

Any other business

37. **Awarding Body closure.** The Head of Veterinary Nursing reported that all students registered with the RCVS Awarding Body had either achieved their qualification or transferred to another AO, and that the letter to Ofqual submitting the formal surrender of recognition had been sent.

38. **Mind Matters initiative.** It was noted that an animated video will be produced for use by VN centres.

39. **Assessment of Day One Skills.** A query was raised regarding the requirement in the AO / HEI handbook that the assessment of Day One Skills must be by unseen examination, and whether more guidance should be provided on the use of multiple assessment methods. It was agreed that this should be considered, taking account of guidance provided by QAA for HEIs.

40. **Future of Higher Education – Green paper.** It was noted that a consultation paper on the future of higher education had been issued. The consultation period ended in January. The Head of Veterinary Nursing would forward the link to the paper to all Committee members and asked for comments by 4 December. These would be incorporated into the RCVS response which would be circulated to the Committee for information. It was agreed that a glossary of terms should be provided for the Committee members.
Date of future meetings

41. The following dates were confirmed:
All meetings to start at 11.00am
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Meeting</strong></th>
<th>Veterinary Nurses Council &amp; Council</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
<td>2 February 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title</strong></td>
<td>RVN PI Committee Chairperson’s Report to VN Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Classification</strong></td>
<td>Unclassified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary</strong></td>
<td>This report sets out the work of the Registered Veterinary Nurse (RVN) Preliminary Investigation (PI) Committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Decisions required</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attachments</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **Authors**       | Michael Hepper  
                   Barrister/Chief Investigator  
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                   Eleanor Ferguson  
                   Solicitor/Head of Professional Conduct  
                   020 7202 0718  
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Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons

Registered Veterinary Nurses Preliminary Investigation Committee

RVN Chair’s report to VN Council 2 February 2016

Introduction

Since the last Report to Council there have been three meetings of the RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee (27 October 2015, 1 December 2015 and 12 January 2016).

RVN Concerns received

Between 22 September 2015 and 18 January 2016 there were sixteen new Concerns received against RVNs. Of these sixteen new Concerns, ten are currently under investigation by the Case Examiners Group (a veterinary and lay member on RVN PIC and a Case Manager). Four Concerns were closed by the Case Examiners Group as there was no arguable case and two cases were referred to the RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee.

RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee

The total number of new cases considered by the Committee between October 2015 and January 2016 was four. Of these four cases, two cases were referred to external solicitors for statements to be taken (when the statements have been completed these cases will be returned to the Committee for decision); two cases were adjourned pending further investigations.

The RVN PIC Committee had previously adjourned one case for further investigation. Upon completion of the further investigations the case was returned and considered by the Committee at its meeting held on 2 December 2015. The Committee closed the concern with advice to the RVN to ensure that medicines ordered and supplied by the practice are done so under the authority of a veterinary surgeon or with a written prescription, and that medicines that are supplied by the practice must be properly labelled.

Ongoing Investigations

The RVN PIC Committee has one ongoing case which is adjourned pending the outcome of criminal court trial against an RVN. The trial date has been scheduled for 25 April 2016 and the outcome will be reported in a future Report to VN Council.
Health Concerns

There are currently three RVNs being considered for the RCVS Health Protocol.

Referral to Disciplinary Committee

Since the last report the RVN PIC Committee has not referred any new cases to the RVN Disciplinary Committee. The RVN Disciplinary Hearing held in November 2015 resulted in the RVN’s name being removed from the Register.

Judicial Review

It is reported to VN Council that on the 5 November 2015 the RCVS was subject to a Judicial Review (see http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2015/3282.html). The RCVS successfully opposed two grounds but agreed with the High Court of Justice – Queen’s Bench Division, Administrative court third ruling that the incorrect ‘test’ had been applied and there was an ‘arguable case’ and therefore the Case Examination Group should have referred the case for consideration by RVN Preliminary Investigation. The matter has since been referred to the RVN PIC for decision.

MDH/20/01/2016
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>VN Council</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>2 February 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Veterinary Nurse Disciplinary Committee Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classification</td>
<td>Unclassified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>Update of Veterinary Nurse Disciplinary Committee (‘VN DC’) hearings since the last meeting of the VN Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisions required</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachments</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Author       | Gemma Kingswell  
               Legal & Policy Manager  
               Tel: 020 7202 0729  
               Email: g.kingswell@rcvs.org.uk |
Report of VN DC hearings since the VN Council meeting on 8 October 2015

Background
1. Since the last meeting of the VN Council, the VN DC has met on one occasion.

Ms Lindsay Newell
2. This case was heard by VN DC between 16 and 19 November 2015. Ms Newell did not attend and was not represented. The charges against Ms Newell related being in possession of veterinary medicines without authority and failing to give any or any sufficient regard to the welfare of six animals in her care.

3. At the relevant time, Ms Newell ran a wildlife and rescue centre and the allegations were a result of an RSPCA investigation of those premises. As part of the investigation, RSPCA officers attended Ms Newell’s home and found veterinary medicines, including controlled drugs, stored in an insecure cabinet within an insecure shed. On inspecting the rescue centre, the officers found two dead animals (one of which had been dead for over a week) and a further four that were emaciated and in poor physical condition. Two of the four animals that were found alive died shortly after being removed from the centre. VN DC found all of the charges relating to animal welfare proved and their full findings are available at [http://www.rcvs.org.uk/document-library/newell-lindsay-november-2015-findings-of-fact/](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/document-library/newell-lindsay-november-2015-findings-of-fact/). They further concluded that Ms Newell’s actions did amount to disgraceful conduct in a professional respect and their full reasons can be found at [http://www.rcvs.org.uk/document-library/newell-lindsay-november-2015-findings-of-disgraceful-conduct/](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/document-library/newell-lindsay-november-2015-findings-of-disgraceful-conduct/).

4. In deciding sanction, VN DC considered a number of aggravating factors in this case. It found that, in respect of both charges, the misconduct was “sustained over a period of time rather than being a single and isolated incident” and that, in respect of the second charge, that there was “actual harm caused to animals, which resulted in the deaths of four out of the six animals.” The Committee felt that this constituted reckless disregard for animal welfare rather than deliberate acts but, nevertheless, said that these animals unnecessarily suffered for a period of at least four weeks due to inadequate diet and that, as rescue animals that were already vulnerable, the expectation was that they would be given the appropriate level of care. As a result, VN DC directed the Registrar to remove Ms Newell’s name from the register.


Upcoming hearings
6. There are no upcoming hearings before the VN DC.
Appeals

7. There are no pending appeals against any decision of VN DC.

VN DC Clerk

8. From 18 January 2016, Chloe Newbold will take over from Gemma Kingswell as Clerk to DC and VN DC.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Meeting</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
<td>2 February 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title</strong></td>
<td>VN Register Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Classification</strong></td>
<td>Unclassified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary</strong></td>
<td>This paper gives the number of registered veterinary nurses as at 20 January 2016, as well as the number of new registrations, transfers to the register, and removals for 2015.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Decisions required</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attachments</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **Author**  | Annette Amato  
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a.amato@rcvs.org.uk |
Veterinary Nurses Register

a. Number of registered VNs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>20/01/2016</th>
<th>22/01/2015</th>
<th>22/01/2014</th>
<th>30/01/2013</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Registered Veterinary Nurses</td>
<td>13164</td>
<td>11381</td>
<td>10277</td>
<td>9406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Listed Veterinary Nurses</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>959</td>
<td>1052</td>
<td>1127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Nurses removed for non-payment of annual fee (annually – carried out in early January)</td>
<td>688* RVN</td>
<td>302 RVN</td>
<td>430 RVN</td>
<td>549 RVN</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>60 VN</td>
<td>63 VN</td>
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*173 of the RVNs removed in early January have now been restored to the Register

b. Number of admissions and transfers to the register

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total registrations</td>
<td>1140</td>
<td>1054</td>
<td>995</td>
<td>925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfers to the register**</td>
<td>989</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*These include voluntary transfers in January and early February 2015, and the transfer of all remaining Listed VNs with active records on 17 February 2015, with the introduction of the new Royal Charter.